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The Times Literary Supplement

November 28 1986 Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX

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- Cover picture Rodin's "The Three Shades" can be seen at the Hayward Gallery until January 25, in the exhibition *Rodin: Sculpture and Drawings*, which is reviewed on page 1351.

A prodigious one-man show

Russell Davies

CHARLES HIGHAM
Orson Welles: The rise and fall of an American genius
377pp. New English Library. £12.95.
0430 39284 B
BARBARA LEAMING
Orson Welles: A biography
562pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
0297 784765
JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR
Orson Welles: A celebration
176pp. Pavilion. £14.95.
18145 0025
ROBERT L. CARRINGER
The Making of "Citizen Kane"
180pp. John Murray. Paperback, £8.95.
07195 42480

One of the world's favourite views of Orson Welles in later life - it can be seen pinned to many a notice-board in the form of a best-selling postcard - shows him inside a limousine, sucking imperiously on a torpedo-shaped cigar. The venomous intensity of his profile is explained by what we can see in the background: a giggling, gawping multitude pressing against the side windows of the vehicle. Being inside it with Welles, we can participate a little in his visible scorn. On the other hand, it is possible to envy the crowd the security of the intervening glass, for it is by no means comfortable to feel a part of Welles's space. It is like sharing an aquarium with a very large ocean-going predator of uncertain appetite. If Welles by this stage was a failure, it was only in the sense that any imprisoned wild creature is a failure - no longer living out the natural life for which it is equipped.

Somehow the compulsion to regard Welles as a sport of nature is hard to resist. Perhaps this is because, simply, the man was a genius even more extravagantly gifted than we have yet realized. More susceptible of proof, I suspect, is the theory that in a "showbiz" century, where a professional mountebank has purged his way into a two-term Presidency, Orson Welles was the completest, most devotedly self-produced one-man show that even the United States has seen. America's business is show-business; not Welles always had show to offer, whether substance could be mustered or not. Show-people pursued him with a kind of accidental implacability - why, even the minister who officiated at Welles's first wedding

turned out to be the co-author of *I Was in Fugitive from a Chain Gang*.

Consider Orson's ninth birthday, as described by Charles Higham in *Orson Welles: The rise and fall of an American genius*, and ask yourself what other trade he could have taken up. His mother, Beatrice Ives Wells, was dying:

In the large and handsome apartment at 150 East Superior Street, Beatrice spoke to him of her approaching end, quoting Shakespeare, her shining eyes appearing dark by the light of the candles on his birthday cake. Eyes that had been green were now almost black with suffering; her flesh was yellow and flabby with sickness. She told Orson to blow out all the candles on the cake, and as he did so, for there was no other light in the room, it became utterly dark. In this charged and symbolic way, she told him what death was, and he may never have recovered from that terrifying moment.

Well, perhaps there were the makings of a mortician in Orson - though the production values here are distinctly theatrical. Higham, the natural Hollywood melodramatist among our biographers, clearly relies on Welles's own account here - what other report could there be of such an intimate scene? - but instinct suggests that for once, what Welles subsequently wished the scene to have been like may not have been too far different from what the birthday boy perceived of his own ceremonial. Barbara Leaming, in *Orson Welles: A biography*, it should be noted, does not mention this tableau at all, noting merely that "two days after his ninth birthday, his mother was taken to Chicago Memorial Hospital, where, two days after that, she died of acute yellow atrophy of the liver at the age of forty-three". Less credulous about Orson's childhood, Professor Leaming is also less interested in it, which I consider a mistake.

By any account, appearances began to overtake deeds quite early in Welles's life. At the Todd School in Illinois, Higham assures us, "when one boy attacked Orson with his fists, Orson disappeared into the bathroom and covered his face with red paint, then emerged looking so badly bloodied that no one attempted to assault him again". If Welles was able to manipulate the quite complex psychology of victimization so successfully in his school days, one may be very sure he was the master of it in his declining years. In even his most self-serving, big-timing rages, such as those directed against the hapless directors of latter-day television commercials (everyone is advertising or broadcasting has heard a bootleg tape of one or other of these cataclysmic wiggings),

Welles was careful to maintain a high quotient of hurt. To stand on his dignity was itself hurtful. How could they do this to me? The glaring Welles in the limousine photo reminds this mood.

But we can, and should, go back further into his infancy - in the eighteen-months-old child, when his surrogate father, "Daddy" Bernstein, happened upon the not-so-tiny Orson (ten pounds at birth) in his cot, and was greeted, so he said, with the baby's opinion that "The desire to take medicine is one of the greatest features which distinguishes men from animals". Whether Dr Bernstein went on to discuss with the tot the possibility that "distinguish" might be a more correct form of the verb in this *aperçu* is not recorded; but Bernstein instantly pronounced Orson a genius. History must just as promptly identify Bernstein as a fantasist and a fake - or in his socially diluted form, an extremely besotted and a self-deluding impresario, for whom George Orson Welles was to be the prize exhibit. Maurice Bernstein was an impeccably dandified physician, a volatile Russian "irresistible to women", by Welles's curiously doing account; and Beatrice Ives Welles, being a striking henry and musically gifted (the two qualifications essential to ensure Dadda), was of course one of the women in question, though devotions were reportedly reciprocated on a platonic basis. No stranger in the bedroom, said Welles to Leaming, Bernstein was "satisfied with the balcony". It afforded an excellent view of Orson.

And Welles, seemingly, was satisfied with Bernstein, in spite of being lumbered by him with the nursery nickname "Pookles". In time Dadda was to compound this offence in several ways: when Welles's real father left him some money, for example, Dadda hung on to much of it and bought a large house, "decorated... entirely with furniture which had belonged to my mother". This was a dedicated campaign of usurpation of Pookles's nest; but in Leaming's version (produced in a kind of intermittent collusion with Welles, though independently of his frequent suggestions as to method and shape), no real resentment of Bernstein emerges until his death - in an outrageously symbolic fall from a ladder in Beverly Hills. I find it hard to picture this event without seeing the words "social climbing" painted, cartoon-fashion, on the ladder's side. Charles Higham, for his part, takes a plain man's dim view of Bernstein, as his index sub-headings imply ("Bernstein: money-grubbing antics or; as source of misinformation on Welles...").

Access to correspondence did not sweeten Higham's opinion of Dadda. "His sour and charmless letters, laced with excessive romantic praise for Orson's every action, make very disagreeable reading."

Where Pookles and Dadda inevitably agreed was in classifying Orson as a genius, for this was an estimate which Welles on his own admission never thought to question until he reached middle age. He may have concluded that Munchausenian boasting on the Bernstein pattern was what fathers were for - though his own real father stayed around long enough to indicate other possibilities. Richard Head Welles was an inventor and manufacturer, notably of carbide lamps for conveyances (some family lore pertaining to the trade is almost literally "re-cycled" in the course of *The Magnificent Ambersons*); but by the time Welles père and Orson knew each other really well, Dick Welles was primarily a drunk. When they took a voyage to the Orient together - Orson being about fifteen - Dick was almost permanently completely intoxicated, and in such poor health generally that he had Orson sign an undertaking that should death come to the senior Welles in a distant land, he would not "be hurried in the ground". Both parents seem to have possessed an impressive talent for dramatizing their own morbidity.

Dick Welles survived the trip, but only just. He died in a Chicago hotel in the age of fifty-eight - remembered as a "great age" by Welles, in conversation with Leaming. This may have been another case of the Bernsteinian hyperbole and even fabrication for which Welles was noted; but it also counts, I think, as an indication of the huge strain the child Orson had felt in playing father to the man. He was always to be troubled and fascinated by father-figures (a guise based on some paradigm of the grumpy, disreputable but charming patriarchal figure was his favourite social refuge in later times); and his interpretation of Falstaff in *Chimes at Midnight*, which everyone now agrees is worked backwards from the scene of boozing old Sir John's rejection by the Prince, is without doubt deeply coloured by Welles's own clashes with his father. Leaming seizes on this, working out the parallels thoroughly and producing one of the more effective passages in her book, while Higham falters at this point. To reproduce Welles's own exegesis, as published in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, was useful ("Falstaff is the character in whom I believe the most, the most entirely good man in all drama"), but Higham's

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amplification of this text is repetitious and anti-climactic.

By any standards, there was sufficient psychological baggage to equip Welles for his journey into art. But he had more – a brother, Richard Ives Welles, who being all 17 years older, must for a time have appeared to swell the parental team to a confusing quartet. Then again, Orson's intelligence was such that he will have perceived very early that "Dickie" was himself neither intelligent nor stable. Eventually, in 1927, he was declared insane, suffering from advanced schizophrenia and "dementia simplex". Some years later, having secured his release from the Knickerbocker State Institution for the Insane, Illinois, Orson was obliged to keep him in monthly cheques of approximately \$85: a small price to pay for Dickie's quietude, had it been obtained – but it was not. More than once, Dickie laid embarrassing claim to authorship of Orson's early successes, and his personal letters were not comforting to receive. "During the course of the Christmas festivities", began one which arrived in the vexed aftermath of *Citizen Kane*, "I contracted gonorrhoea." Shortly afterwards Dickie turned up at Welles's Mercury production office bearing a gift for the prodigy – a bottle of pickled watermelon rinds.

This picturesque (medically inspired?) gift-idea is surely representative of Dickie Welles's contribution to his brother's existence. Till his death in 1975, in a low-life apartment in San Francisco, Dickie must always have been the Grace Poole in the title of Orson's mind – a source not only of disturbing noises at inconvenient times, but surely also of an intimate dread lest congenital patterns belatedly repeat themselves within the psyche of Orson himself. As it was, Welles celebrated his hold on reality not by diminishing it tenderly, but by subjecting it to violent and barely supportable tests. There were many periods in his career when,

through overwork, stimulants or the professional megalomania which offered his likeliest point of entry to the realm of madness, Welles behaved quite as abominably as the bearded anarchist "bohemian" of perennial popular legend. Evidently he could not relish the breadth of his own capesities without thus parading them along the borderline with chaos – a chance he had long seen reflected in the features of his own brother. Things might have been simpler if Dickie had had money; but on account of his insanity his patrimony was "retained" – by Dr Bernstein.

The biographies before us express a two-to-one majority in favour of the conviction that Welles's career began at the age of five or six when he played a walk-on part in the Chicago Opera's *Sansone and Delilah* (a work which certainly reappears, hysterically pastiche, in *Citizen Kane*); and that an inspired stroke of casting also secured him the role of Trouble in *Madam Butterfly*. It must have been agreeable to the child to discover that high art had such a ready place for his strange, flat, oriental features – to be Westernized in time with a hilariously inventive and lifelong succession of false noses. But Welles never supplied such telling extracts of early autobiography without an accompanying sauce – a tangy lollipop of Americana to undercut the non-stop artiness of his upbringing. In this instance it was the follow-up story of his next role: costumed as a robber in Marshall Field's Chicago department store, buttonholing casual customers with the memorable catch-line: "I must hurry – or else it will be too late to see the woollen underwear on the eighth floor!" So, at least, went Orson's tale. If its object was to establish how early in life he was forced into an oscillation between noble culture and travelling salesmanship, then it was well calculated.

Welles's famously self-deprecating summary of his career – that he had started at the top and



Orson Welles in *The Lady from Shanghai*, a picture from John Russell Taylor's book reviewed on this page.

worked his way down – was issued very much for a cinematically inclined posterity which, he correctly divined, would be slow to recognize the value of work it could not instantly call up for review on film or videotape. But historians sensitive to the contrasting difficulties of theatrical innovation will give Welles as much credit for his extraordinary rise to the peak from which he so notoriously descended. Had he died at the age of twenty-six, he would have left *Kane*, to be sure, as his personal testament; but also a large body of Mercury Theatre collaborations as evidence of his technical and social avant-gardism (consider the emboldening implication for the black theatrical community of the "voodoo Macbeth", however literally tub-thumping its style); and also a vast body of radio work to testify to his glibbling versatility – to his bravado, as well, for Welles was not above making a show of his brinkmanship from one medium to another. John Russell Taylor's *Orson Welles: A celebration*, pictorially feasting on the Kobal Collection (the text is a good, crisp résumé), shows Orson, script in hand, posing humbly by the CBS microphone while still wearing most of his greybeard Captain Shotover rig from the Mercury production of *Heartbreak House*. A lesser freelance might have done all this extra work to prove how much in demand he was. Welles, one becomes convinced, did it and enjoyed it merely because it could be done. Why read a book at home if you could read it out loud to an audience of millions, and be handsomely paid, and at the same time (a point emphasized by the amount of radio material which later resurfaced among Welles's film and theatre projects) enlarge your experience of literature?

As John Russell Taylor points out in a brief discussion of *Chimes*, Welles had by now exhausted a catalogue of mentors. He nominates not only Dad and Dadda, but also John Houseman (Welles's Mercury Theatre partner, but two years older); Hilton Edwards of the Gate Theatre in Dublin (Orson's filial regard for whom is said to have upset Edwards's partner Michael MacLiammoir, groundlessly); and Roger "Skipper" Hill of the Todd School, for whom Orson reserved the tribute: "I fell in love with him. If I am rude it is because he is rude. If he had been gay, so would I...". But by the end of the 1930s, Welles had managed to lose or discard all these father-surrogates. It was necessary, because in *Kane* he was going to mount an annihilating attack on the archetype itself. And indeed, *Citizen Kane* would be nowhere near as compelling as it is if it were not so obviously a young man's film, with the young man himself plastered and strapped and disoriented into the appearance of age. (It is scarcely true, as is so often claimed, that Welles was a virtuoso protean and master of disguise. On the contrary, his undisguisability is often his strength, singling him out on screen as the monster among men.)

Much of *Kane*, and of *Amberson* too, comes over as an American David Copperfield, with giant Murdstones threatening and colliding in the deep black shadows. The famous visible ceilings, and the camera lat into a hole in the floor (specifications available in fantastic profusion from Robert L. Carringer's *The Making of "Citizen Kane"*), are techniques that offer a child's-eye view. *Amberson* in particular gives the viewer a strange sense of being occupied by someone else's unspoken fears. Higham reports jocularly that at one of the *Amberson* previews, a member of the audience wrote on his comment card that Welles "must have been frightened in his cradle to

have made such a movie". Probably the comment itself was jocularly intended, too, but I think it comes quite close to the truth – as would be more obvious if Welles himself had played George Amberson Minafer, instead of leaving it to Tim Holt (whom we resent on his every appearance, of course, precisely because he is not Welles).

In the figure of Kane, Welles recognized and expressed the power within himself to tell people what to think (how could he have ignored this appalling strength when it had been so recently dramatized for him by the public, with their terrified reaction to his *War of the Worlds* broadcast?). It was a power he despised and rejected and feared, and he symbolically destroyed it along with Charles Foster Kane (Ed Sullivan called the movie "cruel and unnecessary"). But Welles himself, of course, retained the power, and, I think, he remained forever fearful of using it. He would wield it in private all right – plenty of lacerated backstage collaborators can testify to that – but in the public statements that were his movies, he could never trust himself to be the dictator. He had a brief try-out as a political columnist, but something of the same inhibition got in the way. He could not issue his works as though they were orders.

To put it another way, he was a poor parent to his work. He engendered it, raised it, fought for it, but could not let it depart with his blessing. The parting called for a quarrel. The biographers ruminate among themselves on this: "Was Charles Higham (and many after him) right?", asks John Russell Taylor, "to blame much of this on a neurotic fear of completion, a deep-seated conviction that anything he might show the world would inevitably be compared with *Citizen Kane* and found wanting?" But I think the problem must have been much more universal than that. What Welles had was an advanced case of the feeling that sometimes afflicts all of us when we have written a painful letter, and somehow do not post it. Duty was discharged easily enough in the writing, but the walk to the pillar-box a bigger moral step. Where Welles perhaps went further was in his outrage when his "letters" were stamped, addressed and posted for him. Some of us might have been grateful for being thus distanced from our responsibilities. No doubt Welles at some level was himself grateful, or at least relieved. But pride asserted itself, and he regularly blew up, or feigned an explosion, as his work underwent the final tamperings of lesser men. He needed to feel the thing had been untimely ripped from his creative womb; in fact, his temperament was perhaps better fitted for the role of grieving mother than ever it was for fatherhood of whatever kind. (His reasons for naming his first daughter Christopher remain mercifully imponderable.)

What makes Welles's life anti-climactic thereafter is not any steady decline in his work (which in any case is subject to marvellous rejuvenations) and certainly not any diminution in his capacity for scandal; having risen to the challenge of marriage to Rita Hayworth, he remains for three decades at an impressive pitch of misbehaviour and indiscretion. What is different about the story in its later parts is that we lose the sense that Welles is discovering new things about himself. Worse, for all of us we gain the sense that he is not. His freethinking does not disguise it, and the wondrously defiant variety of his life becomes sad. He swells, becomes enormous. Somebody helps him into the limousine, and he never gets out.

Resurrection of a ghost

John Butt

GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ
The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor
Translated by Randolph Hogan
106pp. Cape. £8.95.
0224021605

This book is non-fiction, we hope. It is a translation of a 1970 reprint of a story originally ghost-written by Gabriel García Márquez in 1955 and told by a sailor who was washed overboard from a Colombian destroyer, survived ten days of thirst, starvation and sharks, was cast ashore and briefly became the darling of the Colombian media at a time when all but politically anodyne news was banned under the dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla. Embarrassed by the publicity, the sailor had a fit of conscience and sold the "true" story to *El Espectador*, for which García Márquez was a reporter. The facts revealed misuse of navy boats for smuggling, there was a furore and the dictator closed the paper for subversion.

As far as I know, nothing that García Márquez published under his own name before 1955 aroused much interest, including *Leaf Storm*, *In Evil Hour* and *No One Writes to the Colonel*. The enormous success of *100 Years* predictably encouraged the publishing houses to overturn this verdict of silence not only on those novels, but even on his most forgettable newspaper pieces, with the result that their author is being saddled, in Spanish and now in English, with a swarming oeuvre of reprints, to put it mildly, middling value. Consequently he is starting to look like one of the most overrated modern Hispanic authors. *Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* is a shocking example: García Márquez was obviously embarrassed to see the dust blown

off these cuttings which had appeared fifteen years earlier under the name of an obscure seaman. In a diffident foreword he presents the spectacle of an author blaming his publishers for the quality of his own work.

I find it depressing that the publishers are not so much interested in the merit of the story as in the name of the author, which, much to my sorrow, is also that of a fashionable writer. It is now published in the form of a book, that is because I agreed without thinking about it very much, and I am not a man to go back on my word.

And there one might let the matter rest, were it not that this mildly exciting but run-of-the-mill tale of endurance on the high seas throws light on García Márquez's development as a writer. It exemplifies his training in a certain tradition of reporting. The hagiographers may try to build a legend of fearless investigative journalism on this book, but the pursuit of hard fact at any price was not García Márquez's style in those days and has not always been since. He makes it quite clear in the preface that at the time he had no inkling of the controversial nature of the seaman's story and was earning his bread turning in "politically germ-free" copy "to entertain the readers". Although there is no reason to question the basic facts in the sailor's account, it is in places luridly over-written and for all one knows generously embroidered, since, by his own cheerful admission, his reporting standards were not exactly rigorous. He said in an interview in *El Tiempo* (Bogotá, December 22, 1960) that when news was short on *El Espectador* "we invented all sorts of things" and went on to admit to having faked a story about a demonstration in Quibdó and another about a helicopter landing at the Tequendama falls. Nor will readers of his more recent Wednesday articles in the respected Spanish daily *El País* have forgotten that, in his weekly catalogue of exaggerations and super-

ficialities, he claimed that during the Falklands War British soldiers had to subdue by gunfire the sodomitical fury of the Gurkhas against Argentine prisoners.

But his inadequacies as a journalist – for instance a certain impatience with prosaic fact – are part of the secret of García Márquez's success as a writer of fiction. The techniques of popular journalism, a taste for hyperbole, melodrama and sensation, and for imaginative worlds that are ten times larger than life, are so deeply ingrained in his writing that sentences like these are the hallmarks of the prose: "his pistol went off as it hit the floor, and the bullet wrecked the cupboard, passed through the wall, roared across next door's dining room, and reduced to dust a lifesize plaster statue of a saint on the high altar in the church at the other end of the square" (*Chronicle of a Death Foretold*), or "he had seventeen male children by seventeen different women and they were exterminated one after the other on a single night before the oldest reached the age of thirty-five. He survived fourteen attempts on his life, seventy-three ambushes, and a firing squad" (*100 Years of Solitude*).

This love of whimsical overstatement is the basis of the humour of *100 Years of Solitude*, which, as the author regretfully complains, is not "serious", i.e. it is a comic masterpiece ambiguous in its implications and not, like most of his other work, a volley of more or less earnest social criticism aimed point-blank at huge and predictable targets like Latin-American violence and injustice. *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* is among the earliest of García Márquez's attributed works, and it already shows an imagination straining to be let off the leash. Virgilio Lloza remarks delicately of it that "it has a cleanliness and sureness of touch which reveal that its author has more gifts as a story teller than as a journalist", and one can see his point, and García Márquez's burlesque gift in embryo, in this passage where the star-

ving sailor catches a seagull:

once I had it in my hands and felt the pulsing of the warm body and looked into its shiny, round dark-gray eyes, I hesitated... With the first twist, I felt the neck bones break. With the second I felt its living, warm blood spurt through my fingers. I pitted it. It looked like a murder victim. Its head, still pulsating, hung down from its body and throbbed in my hand.

It is pretty clear that García Márquez had to disentangle his literary powers from this less fortunate gift for writing hack copy if he was ever to write anything as good as *100 Years of Solitude*, and his subsequent career has been a hard and not always victorious campaign against the baleful legacy of that early newspaper training. His best work depends on unbridled fantasy, on reviving what is essentially a child's vision of the world – on forging a portage, journalism and "comment" in every sense. The trouble is that the commentator, and with him the views, tends to creep in whenever the imaginative impetus of his novels falters and the realist comes to the fore. He once said that his "great regret" was that he was no longer a reporter, but readers of *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* and his other journalism will surely agree that this nostalgia reflects a puzzling misjudgment of the nature of his own talent. But it may explain why *100 Years of Solitude* is something of an isolated phenomenon in his work. If there is a marked difference between it and his other books, it may be because he does not find it easy to live too far from current affairs in the political, or at least only obliquely and ambiguously political, world of the former novel, and feels that he ought to stiffen his writing with a fair amount of obvious social comment and clumsy political satire. He often seems to lanker after the strident clarity of the reporter, all too evident in *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor*, despite the fact that the points he needs to make come through much more effectively in the ironic, indirect style of his masterpiece.

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Fiction

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Of Spain and Bloomsbury

Raymond Carr

XANFIELDING (Editor)
Best of Friends: The Brennan-Partridge Letters
244pp. Chatto and Windus. £14.95.
0701130288

Gerald Brennan has had a greater influence on my life than any other writer, living or dead. His *Spanish Labyrinth* (1943) kindled my interest in Spanish history. I was sent by the Oxford University Press to visit him in order to persuade him to write the volume on Spain in the Oxford History of Europe. I shall never forget his reply: "You can't get at the truth by writing history; only the novelist can do that." Tied to sources, he explained, the sympathetic imagination withers in all but the greatest historians. It was Brennan's refusal that left me the writing of *Spain: 1808-1939*, causing me to desert a work on copper prices in seventeenth-century Sweden for the wider and more challenging fields in which I have remained stuck ever since.

My admiration for Brennan as the greatest writer on Spain in the English language remains undimmed. Hero-worship, perhaps, is no proper condition for reviewing *Best of Friends*, edited by Xan Fielding, in which the hero exposes himself to public view in an exchange of letters with his closest friend, Ralph Partridge. With one gap in the 1940s, the correspondence stretches from 1919 (ill Partridge's death in 1960).

Brennan went into self-imposed exile in Spain because he did not have the money to live and write in England – money remoted a constant preoccupation. But, through Partridge, his intellectual and emotional anchor remained in Bloomsbury. The genius of Bloomsbury was an exceptional talent for friendship; but with this went the danger of getting friendships confused and a propensity to discuss the resultant muddle at great length and with no bolds barred.

Although neither Brennan nor Partridge was a typical Bloomsbury product, in this they ran true to form. Brennan and Partridge's wife, Carrington, fell in love. Not surprisingly, Partridge was jealous. Yet in the end, in a long exchange of letters, all is sorted out. Friendship – or is it civilized behaviour on Bloomsbury standards?

– triumphs. Brennan's affair with Carrington brought him no lasting happiness. She was, he writes, "one of those who grow fat on what they suck from others", nor could she satisfy his strong sexual appetite.

To satisfy these appetites Brennan indulged in affairs with working-class girls – it was a way to cross the class barrier – and in his later years with younger women. These letters describe to Partridge his violent physical affair with his servant Juliana. He encouraged a friend to seduce her in his absence in order to prove, one could be left without qualm once she interfered with his work. "The poetry lay in the fucking and I gave her a child deliberately because that seemed a more complete and thorough way of fucking her." He cherished the child, which does something to redeem an episode that the puritanically minded will find disturbing. One does not seduce one's maids under the age of consent.

Sadly for the political historian there is little meat to chew. There is an interesting passage on the revolutionary intentions of the Socialists and on the conspiratorial activities of the Right to 1936. There is a fine description of the appalling conditions of post-Civil War Spain: "It is Belsen." One glimpse of Franco – "just a fat white hand waving behind the bullet-proof glass of a limousine" to the applause of a crowd of children.

For the literary historian there is a richer harvest: for example, Brennan on Gibbon, and on the tradition of the English novel, which he did not admire – even Jane Austen "had the mind and outlook of a governess". Insiders' judgments, sometimes witty, on literary friends abound: on Virginia Woolf; on Lytton Strachey; on E. M. Forster.

Embarrassing as such intimate letters must be at times, they constitute a moving record of a friendship broken only for that time in the 1940s, when Brennan could not stomach Partridge's pacifism; it seemed to him simply a form of war hysteria "a reversal". Brennan seems a man who needed solitude to write and company to stimulate him. He appreciated Hugh Trevor-Roper's fine intelligence, but a four-day visit "rather depleted my batteries".

Brennan and Partridge were natural writers and complementary characters. Their letters, splendidly edited, make marvellous reading.

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Molly-coddling courtier

John Grigg

JAMES LEES-MILNE
The Enigmatic Edwardian: The life of
Reginald 2nd Viscount Esher
401pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £15.
0283 99395

To judge from the list of offices he turned down, Reginald ("Regy") Brett, 2nd Viscount Esher, must have been either a genuine superman or a phenomenally gifted con-man. After reaching his middle forties without much to show for his life—apart from organizing Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations as secretary to the Office of Works—over the next two decades he had the chance of becoming permanent under-secretary at the Colonial and War Offices, governor of Cape Colony, Secretary of State for War, Viceroy of India, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and ambassador in Paris. These varied and glittering posts were offered him by leaders of different political persuasions, or none. (It was Kitchener who asked him to be CIGS.) All were refused, and he continued to operate as a power, or at any rate a powerful influence, behind the scenes.

Such a man invites the description enigmatic, and in Esher's case the aura of mystery was enhanced by the knowledge that his published journals and letters, though running to four volumes, revealed only part of the truth. Now we are told by James Lees-Milne that they were "not only reduced (they had to be), but often bowdlerized and sometimes altered by the editors" (Esher's sons). Until the full record could be consulted and used by a biographer, Esher was bound to remain an enigma.

Mr Lees-Milne has been given the necessary freedom and, in exercising it, has produced a book which, in a sense, invalidates its title. Esher no longer seems really enigmatic, but a man whose extreme sexual abnormality largely explains why he fought shy of positions that would have made him too conspicuous. Lees-Milne shows that his natural tendency was confirmed at Eton where, like many others of his generation, he fell under the spell of William

Johnson (Cory), teacher of genius and proselytizing homosexual, who sought to indoctrinate the governing class of late Victorian England with the ethos of Socrates and Plato. Regy Brett was an apt pupil, and in due course he found a wife whose cheerful acceptance of her husband's tastes and habits could hardly have been excelled in ancient Greece. They had two sons and two daughters, but of these children they cared only for one, the younger son, Maurice, for whom his father, indeed, conceived an incestuous passion. Molly (as he was unfortunately nicknamed) had inclinations quite the opposite of his father's, but nevertheless played up to him, partly out of affection but partly, it would appear, from motives of self-interest. It is not a pretty story.

If Esher needed an example to warn him of the danger of trying to combine his sort of private life with a prominent public position, the case of Lord Rosebery, another of William Johnson's disciples, was warning enough. Rosebery suffered from chronic insomnia, and during his short premiership (1894-5) his brittle nerves almost cracked. Though his psychological problems had more than one cause, including the difficulty of following Gladstone as prime minister (not unlike Eden's in following Churchill), Lees-Milne believes with reason that he "lived in terror" of allegations about his private life. Esher was wise to avoid exposing himself to such anxiety and strain. Yet his reluctance to hold overt responsibility was also, to some extent, dictated by his temperament. Arthur Benson, who knew him well, suggests that "his subtle and adroit brain, critical rather than creative . . . was unfitted for the decisiveness demanded of proconsuls, and that his continued refusals of the highest administrative posts showed a justifiable distrust of himself in such capacities". If so, his self-awareness and readiness to act on it have to be admired. Few are able to resist the lure of office, whatever their disqualifications.

Esher's talents were pre-eminently those of the courtier and counsellor, though the scope of his political interests could not have been wider if he had been prime minister. He had plenty of ideas, but liked others to give effect to



Max Beerbohm's caricature of Lord Esher is taken from the book reviewed here.

them. Lees-Milne prints the delightful Max Beerbohm cartoon of him, frock-coated, confronting the figure of Bismarck and saying, "Never mind who I am. Just go and do what I tell you." His critical intellect, allied to his patriotism, enabled him to do the State much service, and in no sphere was his contribution more important than in that of army reform. On the face of it, he was a rather surprising person to be fascinated by military matters. An aesthete such as he was, with a streak of decadence, might have been expected to view them with distaste. Yet he joined the militia as a young man, and for the rest of his life never ceased to be intensely interested in the army, and in the wider problems of defence. After

the South African War he served on the commission set up to investigate the defects that brought to light; and this in turn led to the appointment of a committee, over which he presided, to advise on a new structure for the War Office.

The Esher Committee (as it is known to history) was unusual in that most of its recommendations were promptly implemented. One of its offspring was the Committee of Imperial Defence, on which Esher sat until the outbreak of war in 1914. He backed Haldane's army reforms and involved himself in the campaign to raise a Territorial force in London. He accepted an honorary colonelcy in the Royal Fusiliers. This enabled him to wear a uniform with a colonel's badge of rank when, during the war, he was sent by Kitchener to France, initially to act as liaison between the war minister and the BEF's commander, Sir John French. As time went on his role expanded into that of a glorified politico-military busybody, with functions all the more wide-ranging for being never precisely defined. Lees-Milne states, on evidence that seems rather insufficient, that he became "de facto" head of the British Intelligence Service in France". But being bilingual (his mother was French), and having so many top-level contacts in both countries, he supplemented the normal processes of diplomacy in ways that could be valuable, though his presence was naturally much resented by the British ambassador, Lord Bertie.

Lees-Milne writes with subtlety and charm, and his book is, of course, a revelation on the private side of Esher's life. On his public work it has much less to offer and is, indeed, rather perfunctory. (The Esher Committee, his chief claim to fame, is disposed of in two or three pages.) Moreover, Mr Lees-Milne is not wholly reliable on the political background. It is, for instance, incorrect to say that "Asquith approved Lord Lansdowne's memorandum" in late 1916, and to imply that this was the cause of Lloyd George's resignation. But as the personal study of a man who was both attractive and repellent, and who in any case was highly intelligent, the book is throughout fascinating.

On the national health

Charles Townshend

JONATHAN RABAN
Coasting
301pp. Collins Harvill. £10.95.
080 2721198
ROBERT COLLS and PHILIP DODD (Editors)
Englishness: Politics and culture 1880-1920
378pp. Croom Helm. £25.
0289 08490
COLIN LEYS
Politics in Britain: An introduction
330pp. Verso. £6.95.
080918580
TERENCE DUQUESNE and EDWARD GOODMAN
Britain: An unfree country
242pp. Heterodox, Suite 20, 3 Abbey Orchard
Street, London SW1P 2JJ.
18171001X
GORDON HEALD and ROBERT J. WYBROW
The Gullup Survey of Britain
300pp. Croom Helm. £19.95.
0799 38462

At the start of *Coasting*, Jonathan Raban fires off a bitter salvo of English faults. Insular, arrogant, wedded to fine social distinctions, particularist, aggressively practical, with a loud contempt for anything smelling of abstraction or theory, philistine, money-grubbing, sexually abnormal, casually rude ("a vice which they claim as a virtue by labelling it as forthrightness") and violent, the English hold foreigners in contempt, making them the butts of the jokes which the English like telling each other. "For the English are very famous—at least among themselves—for their sense of humour, and pronounce it an essential component of a sterling character."

This broadside, couched in the style of the old satirists' books in which Raban steeped himself before and during his coastwise journey, is offered ostensibly as the outsider's view. Raban presents it dead-pan, without en-

dorsement or denial; yet little in his book serves to contradict it. *Coasting* is an ambitious work, and in spite of Raban's effective—if unfair—disarming of criticism at the outset by lining himself up at the end of "a long queue of certifiable obsessives", it must be judged a failure in one central respect. Taking to a boat as a means of grandly coming to terms with one's native land (his words) may well help to resolve some problems of personal identity. For Raban this voyage was, among other things, a journey back to personal roots, and a coming-to-terms with his father, once immeasurably older than himself but now mysteriously younger. This dimension of the book is a conspicuous success: the threading of the mental process through the physical details of coastal navigation is skillfully realized. As in his parallel novel, *Foreign Land* (1985), the lone sailor carries a ghostly freight of old acquaintance, and strives to contain or subdue the haunting.

The fineness of Raban's style, and the acuteness of his sensibility, are backed up by an impressive memory for the ingredients of lost times. The splendours and miseries of the novice single-hander make a compelling venture for the reader to follow. It delivers, along the way, some luminous vignettes of the present state of the nation. But the coasting has a wider public purpose. The sense, attributed to Diana Pym in *Foreign Land*, that "between their setting out this morning and their coming home this afternoon", their home port "seemed to have slipped off-centre", provides the basis for an elaborate conceit whereby the insider can become outsider, and thus grasp new truths about the land and its people as a whole. The reader will be in no doubt that Raban is capable of seizing on such truths, but may well feel that he did not need the medium of a thirty-foot ketch in order to do it. Indeed, in one sense the coasting is a false trail, since the weirdly skewed development of the British economy has made the periphery more than ever unrepresentative of the centre. For every

Hull, blessed by unambiguous catastrophe, there are a dozen fat portlets, booming with libreglass-filled merrins and backwoods-Tory yacht clubs. Is this progress or decline? What can one tell of England from these caricatures?

What, in fact, is England? Is there, after all, such a thing? Is it anything more than what Metternich once called Italy, a "geographical expression"? The entity at the centre of Raban's picture remains unfocused—as well it might. The English sense of nationality has often seemed vague or even incoherent by comparison with the Continental pioneers of modern nationalism. At the root of the imprecision lies geographical ambiguity, creating a tension between England and Britain. On the criteria imposed by early nationalist thinkers like Herder and Mazzini, only one of them could form a real nation. If England possessed what the nineteenth-century liberal historian E. A. Freeman called "common nationality in the highest sense", then Britain could be no more than an "artificial nationality", adequate for political purposes but lacking the mysterious inner unity of a true nation. This was an uncomfortable conclusion. But, as Robert Colls and Philip Dodd's collection of essays, *Englishness*, shows, English people in the last part of the nineteenth century were prepped to make the choice. Though formal distinctions between England and Britain, or even the wider "Greater Britain" of imperialists like Charles Dilke, tended to remain blurred, English qualities and English values were held to be the primary binding force.

Just what these qualities were was not always clear, and those then and since who have set themselves to defend the English "way of life" (always "defence" or "preservation" against threats from outside or within, for the dynamic of nationalism is inherently paranoid) have done surprisingly little to specify its constituents. Much has been written around the subject, but there has been less rigorous analysis of English nationalism than of almost any other European example. For this reason, Colls and

Dodd's collection is welcome, though like many of its kind it is of variable quality and relevance. Despite a tendency in its chapter-headings to perpetuate a rather sterile distinction between politics and culture, or more quickly, between "national culture" and "political culture", it moves towards a properly interdisciplinary exploration of the whole public sphere.

Its contributors are agreed that a dramatic heightening of the sense of Englishness occurred towards the end of the nineteenth century. Then the thatched cottage awash with hollyhocks emerged as the vital image of England. As we know from the work of David Cannadine and others, many immemorial national traditions were invented at this time. Some of these essays amplify or sharpen earlier revelations: Alun Howkins suggests that the dominant image of England became not merely rural, but specifically southern; Jeremy Crump makes a brave effort to get at the reasons why Elgar's music was perceived as being quintessentially English. There is less agreement about the spontaneity or otherwise of these processes. Did all this amount, as some argue, to a deliberate strategy to maintain the control (or rather, to use the Gramscian terminology which sits well with this kind of analysis, the hegemony) of the ruling class?

Such was certainly its result. But the sheer range of activities through which Englishness could be evinced, and the visceral glee with which English values were embraced, must cast some doubt on the degree of manipulation involved. To take the example of Elgar's music, Vaughan Williams identified in it "a sense of something familiar" to "us, his fellow countrymen" and this is just what Herder would have seen as a manifestation of the *Volksgeist*, of "culture" properly understood. Crump is no doubt right to describe this as "an occult quality which cannot be specified in musical terms", but this does not make it go away. The point is reinforced by his telling quotation from Eric Fenby, who confessed that

Lloyd George's Boswell

John Campbell

JOHN M. McEWAN (Editor)
The Riddell Diaries 1908-1923
430pp. Athlone. £25.
0483 113007

The diary of Lord Riddell, formerly Sir George Riddell, proprietor of the *News of the World* and confidant of Lloyd George, has long been known to political historians as a tempting source of quotable gossip and vivid table-talk from the seats of the mighty. But they have always felt obliged to treat it with more than usual care, for Riddell published it himself, in three volumes, shortly before his death—that is, fifteen years or so after the events it recorded. The three books—*Lord Riddell's War Diary* (1933), *Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After* (1933) and *More Pages From My Diary* (1934)—acknowledge the help of no editor, provide little information about how the diary was kept, admit to some cuts but no "improvements" and generally present a suspiciously seamless verbatim narrative. While no biographer of Lloyd George or Churchill, Birkenhead or Bonar Law could afford to ignore Riddell's testimony, one could not help wondering sometimes how much credence to place on it.

It is therefore greatly welcome that we should now have an academically authenticated edition, at least of selections from the diary. John M. McEwan's text is far shorter than Riddell's three volumes, and inevitably omits a lot of good stuff. In compensation, however, he is able to print a large amount of material which Riddell considered too strong to publish while many of his principal actors were still alive. More important even than this, his edition—while it shows that Riddell did soften and "improve" a number of passages in his sanitized version—sufficiently validates the

easier in future for historians to use it with confidence. Moreover, the whole diary is now available to scholars at the British Library.

The particular value of Riddell's diary lies in the fact that he himself was a figure of no importance, and no pretensions to importance. Professor McEwan's Introduction makes it clear that he was an unlovely character; but as a diarist he does not intrude his personality on the reader at all. He was the sort of wealthy, discreet and sycophantic hanger-on that Lloyd George found it useful to have around. In 1913 he provided Lloyd George with a house adjoining the golf course at Walton Heath; they played there—and elsewhere—regularly, and Lloyd George talked the whole time. Later in Downing Street, during the war and after, and even in Paris in 1919, Riddell was never far away, at once trusted and ignored by both Lloyd George and his senior colleagues, like a tape-recorder left continuously running. His assiduity was, inevitably, rewarded with a peerage. Characteristically, when Lloyd George fell in 1922, Riddell too fell away. But his fidelity is no concern of the historian. What matters is that during the whole ten years or so of his ascendancy, he was Lloyd George's Boswell.

In that capacity he recorded Lloyd George's shifting moods and perceptions, if not from day to day, certainly from week to week. He listened sympathetically as well to the hopes, fears and grievances of others, particularly Churchill, whose violently fluctuating relationship with Lloyd George is vividly described; these are some of the passages which Riddell in his published version most noticeably omitted or toned down. But it is Lloyd George himself who is always centre stage. We see him "terribly nervous" before his great Queen's Hall speech of September 1914, "feeling, he said, as if he were about to be executed. It was a curious sight to see him lying on the sofa, yawning and stretching himself in a state of just nervous excitement before the

ling." There are pleasant glimpses of him relaxing, for instance in September 1916: "Much talk again about the defects of the War Office. But we spent the greater part of the evening singing Welsh hymns and later old songs such as 'Come into the garden, Maud', 'Cockle and Mussels' etc. LG in great form."

There are some excellent appreciations of colleagues. On Asquith, for instance, in 1912: "He is like a great counsel in whom solicitors and clients have faith. The party feel that the matter is in his hands and that he will see it through satisfactorily. He has splendid judgement and, as a rule, deals with great subjects, in council and in the H of C, in the same imperturbable manner as small ones." "Why Curzon?" Riddell asks in October 1916. "Is he valuable?" "Yes, he is," Lloyd George replies. "He has a valuable lot; he knows about the countries of the world. He has read a lot. He is full of knowledge which none of us possesses. . . . He is not a good executive and has no tact, but he is valuable for the reasons stated." With remarkable perceptiveness, too, Lloyd George picks out Ernest Bevin in 1919: "He is a powerful fellow with a bull neck and a huge voice—a born leader. . . . Mark my word! You will hear more of Bevin."

About others, of course, he is less complimentary. McKenna's status as principal *bête noire* is amply confirmed. ("The truth is that if you could get rid of McKenna, the Government would not be a bad Government")—(plain July 1916); and Grey is firmly written off as "a fish-like person". "He appeals to the British people", Riddell points out. "They like him and trust him." "No doubt they do," Lloyd George replies, "but he is a fish." Though some of his reported speech is killed, at other times Riddell is remarkably good at catching the flavour of Lloyd George's conversation. When, according to Lloyd George, the French and German ambassadors came to Downing Street and went in August 1914, he

German "wept tears like German sausage. Cambon wept like an artist." Northcliffe's Unitarianism is splendidly disparaged: "It is a poor sort of religion. . . . Even the Almighty formed a Trinity."

Two of the most revealing passages which Riddell recorded but which are now published for the first time relate to the summer of 1922, when Lloyd George's government was beginning to collapse in a thickening cloud of scandal. Here is Lloyd George defiantly justifying the sale of honours:

I shall make it quite plain that if there is to be an enquiry, it will have to begin with Lord Salisbury's administration, or at any rate with Arthur Balfour's. Sir George Younger tells me that Lord Northcliffe, for example, gave £200,000 for his peerage. £100,000 of which went to Mrs Keppel and £100,000 to King Edward. And there are several other cases . . . which would be strange reading. I don't defend the system, but I have done merely what other Prime Ministers have done, and I am going to bring the temple down with me. I am not going to be sacrificed by people and the descendants of people who have been engaged in carrying on precisely the same system.

A few weeks later comes this, the most explicit statement we have of Lloyd George's extraordinary proposal to buy *The Times* on Northcliffe's death:

The position is this. I want to get out and am looking for a soft place on which to fall. At the moment I don't see it. However, I want to get control of *The Times*. That would give me great power and would enable me to compel the Conservatives to pay due regard to my views and policies. They attach great importance to the attitude of *The Times*. Therefore I am anxious that no stone should be left unturned to enable me to acquire the paper.

Stuffed as it is with such nuggets of insight and self-revelation, we must hope that Riddell's diary has become fully available in time for John Grigg to make use of it in the latest volumes of his already magnificent biography of Lloyd George.

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when walking about the English country side he "seldom, if ever" found himself humming Delius, "but always some exquisite passage from Elgar".

The question must be whether nationalism, as a general phenomenon of the modern world, is the product of manipulation. The best view seems to be that it grew with such awesome speed because it met widespread needs in developing European society. Belief in nationality had already become the public orthodoxy of the age when the English turned to it. When Bishop Stubbs laid out the genealogy of English institutions, reaching back to the Saxons *vitanegetot*, he was simply giving what his colleague Freeman would call "personality" to an established silhouette of the body politic. In his work it became clear that the primary characteristic of the English was their love of liberty. It was this, over the long run, and in spite of conquests or revolutions, that had moulded their unique constitution. At the same time, the English showed a marked sense of order. Colls suggests, in an ironic tone which is not altogether illuminating, that "the good fortune of the English was to have the idealist-historicist mix deep within themselves". This is a fair illustration of the difficulty of characterizing, let alone explaining, national characteristics. But the outcome was a self-conscious devotion to a certain concept of law. It was, appropriately, vague: the impossibility in English of drawing the distinction between the law in general and in particular which is common in other major languages (*droit/loi, Recht/Gesetz, diritto/legge*, and so on) was to be a fruitful source of obfuscation.

The constitutional parallel to this ambiguity was the failure to provide the separation of powers which has been thought essential in other modern political systems. The ease with which Parliament could slide from being a bulwark of liberty to becoming a source of tyranny was not recognized in the nineteenth century, when its present procedures were substantially fixed. Freeman's naive belief that the democracy of the folk-moot could be effectively preserved in a representative Parliament has been a long time dying. But its death was surely inevitable. For another marked characteristic of the English was their State-forming capacity: they created the first central State, even before the Norman conquest. Notwithstanding all the nineteenth-century liberal aversion to the State, and especially the Hegelian animation of it, the modern State machine lay square in the path of English constitutional development.

Colls draws attention to the fact that it was a Liberal government which finally merged society into State through the 1911 Official Secrets law. Thenceforth "national security" meant the security of Whitehall. By 1920, when the political philosopher Bernard Bosanquet fervently intoned, "Our nation, our country, our State—England, say; what has it always stood for to those who loved it right? For more things than I can tell; but for these at least, honesty, justice, liberty", it was clear that a kind of newspeak had rolled over the old meanings.

Yet to embark upon a *post mortem* on

English liberty would still be seen by many as a premature, not to say alarmist, enterprise. Colls Leys has set out in *Politics in Britain* to break the mould of complacent collusion that still confines not only political journalism—which is after all directly dependent on the State—but also academic political science, which is not. Though its author is a soft Marxist, this is a radical book, whose impact is cumulative. The early chapters surveying the course of recent politics are not wholly convincing, but Leys steadily makes good his assault on conventional views of the British constitution, mesmerized as they are by the minutiae of parliamentary procedural tradition. His central target is precisely the much-vaunted flexibility of the unwritten constitution.

It is certainly remarkable, as Leys suggests, that the very vagueness of this politico-judicial set-up has for so long been praised as if it were a better guarantee of liberty than the written constitutions of foreigners, with their entrenched civil rights. The truth has sadly proved to be just the opposite: imprecision is the greatest threat to individual freedom, as English readers of Kafka or Orwell ("nothing was illegal since there were no longer any laws") are perfectly able to see. But that is in central Europe, or on Airstrip One, not on Albion's shore. Or is it? Anyone who still thinks it is not should try reading Leys's thirty-page chapter on "the British state"—a term which, as he says, has been avoided with uneasy unanimity in British politics textbooks. The charge of alarmism must fail in face of persuasive statistical evidence that the "establishment" is if anything more real today than when the term was coined in the 1950s, and that, as Nevil Johnson put it in his hard-bitten *In Search of the Constitution* (1977, 1980), "we have acquired a professional political elite", by which, as he added, one should not infer anything about its competence, only about its permanence and its isolation.

Johnson has a very different standpoint from Leys (who does not refer to him in his rather stingy source notes), which makes the coherence of their indictment all the more convincing. Both deplore the obsessive secrecy which has cushioned the operations of British functionaries since 1911, and the insulting political rhetoric which conceals the absence of public participation at any level of decision-making. Johnson spoke of complacency and contempt in the attitude of senior officials to the real world. Leys follows him in charting the emasculation of Parliament, the vacuity of "scrutiny" of legislation, and the powerlessness of even the special select committees, dependent on Whitehall for crumbs of information. He points to the "astonishingly limited" powers conceded to the ombudsmen, when these were at last permitted, and more importantly the narrow group from which these supposed public guardians were drawn. "One wonders whether such appointments would have been politically credible in any other country." (He means, presumably, any other country in which public opinion is said to be important.) He goes on to argue the effectiveness of

archaism as a means of deflecting public accountability, a point also stressed by Colls in writing of "the resolving myths of continuity and longevity". The success or archaism is fostered by the uncritical participation of the media in the whole sad charade. If people do get the governments they deserve, it is in part because they get the journalists they deserve.

But do the people deserve their fate? In other words, could they feasibly have prevented these developments? If this is, as Terence Du Quesne and Edward Goodman declare in their gruesome anthology, *Britain*, already an unfree country—and by Stubbs's or Freeman's criteria of communal liberty it unquestionably is—how has this happened? Leys offers an old-fashioned Marxist diagnosis of the "British disease": persistent blurring of the reality of class conflict, and incompetent economic intervention by the State. His most pungent quotation is from the liberal economist J. A. Hobson, whom many Marxists have admired, on the haemorrhage of investment capital: "another century may see England as the retreat for the old age of a small aristocracy of millionaires, who will have made their money where labour was cheapest, and return to spend it where life is pleasantest". Yet concentrating on class rather than ethnic or other conflicts is not finally convincing.

The fracturing of English community calls for different explanations. Maybe it is in part a result of transition from a firmly imaged "England" to a vaguer, more unstable "Britain". Maybe communal liberty was itself largely mythical, and Merrie England could only survive as long as it had not run up against the modern bureaucratic State. But it is too easy to blame everything on an irresistible process of bureaucratization. It is a fact of life that administrators find democracy more or less inconvenient; what is less easy to grasp is why people seem to have become less prepared to put in the work needed to control the accretion of administrative power. "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance", as the revolutionary maxim had it, and it is a hard price. Over the last century it has bankrupted the English people. Johnson ruefully observed that "there has been great deference shown in this country to a large and arrogant interpretation of public powers". What a contrast with the fond popular self-image of sturdy independence! It is as if the

English revolution, still rolling on by degrees into the nineteenth century, then stopped dead in its tracks. The deep deference, which has ensured the persistence of the antique structure for which Britain is now a byword, was never exorcized as in other countries by social revolution or by defeat in war. The British, as Leys registers, remained "subjects", not "citizens". What's in a title? In this case, everything.

To take a single issue, regarded as crucial to the maintenance of any real democratic political structure—public access to information. In nineteenth-century liberals it was axiomatic that an informed public opinion was the only possible foundation for democracy; the alternatives were ignorant mob rule or oligarchy. In Britain now there is no deep public concern to secure (it is too late to present) freedom of information. Where are the petitions with twenty million signatures, or the great demonstrations (to the extent that any outsider with some knowledge of English history would assuredly be expecting)? The public view seems to be that this is an issue strictly for cranks or subversives. Predictably, it does not even figure as a single question in the vast interrogation of the *Gallup Survey of Britain*. Here the public can indulge themselves, or the surveyors, in complex variations on the theme of party confrontation, as if in some endless extension of Robin Day's *Question Time*—which is, in a sense, what modern British politics has come down to. One-third of this overblown compilation of dully interpreted statistics is concerned with these ritual permutations.

Yet one of the most chilling facts which does emerge repeatedly from these surveys is the extraordinary public distrust of Members of Parliament as a group. (Gallup politely avoids the term "politician", and also refrains from probing the reasons for the distrust.) Would Gallup go on to ask the obvious supplementary question: do people trust the State? No need to enquire. Instead we can divert ourselves with a reassuringly banal catalogue of the present self-image of the British: friendly, with a sense of humour, polite, hard-working, trustworthy. These qualities were, of course, picked from a list drawn up by Gallup. "Free" did not figure in it.

Isis flows in Irrawaddy

Aian Sykes

RICHARD SYMONDS
Oxford and Empire: The last lost cause?
366pp. Macmillan. £29.50.
0333 402065

The single most important link between Oxford and the British Empire was jobs. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, over a quarter of Balliol graduates found careers in the Empire, partially fulfilling Jowett's desire to govern the world through his pupils, and almost half of the Indian Civil Service places were won by Oxford men. Richard Symonds's *Oxford and Empire: The last lost cause?* is a wide-ranging, amusing and at times surprising survey of Britain's imperial exiles and the Oxford from which they came. A loof proconsuls and anthropologists "gone native", professors, prelates, martyrs in Malanasta and missionaries driven from God's work to good works by Indian indifference are all here, as well as the inevitable governors, administrators and judges.

Beyond training future rulers, Oxford adapted little to the particular needs of empire. New, more vocational, imperial subjects struggled for acceptance against the conviction that Classics and History were the best training for an imperial elite, and the university never became the intellectual powerhouse of empire of which Rhodes and his first Trustees dreamed. Oxford, declared the zoologist E. R. Lankester, who twice resigned in disgust, was a "dead man's paradise". The presence of overseas graduates made little impact upon the insular preconceptions of their English contemporaries or their professors. What Symonds gingerly treats as an atmosphere of toler-

ance was often plain indifference. If anything, the limitations of Victorian solemnity reinforced prejudice. In 1914, earnest geographers were still puzzling over the survival and increase of the Bantu when other "aboriginal races" had obligingly "dwindled or disappeared" after contact with Europeans.

There was, however, no single Oxford view of empire. Against the mystical imperialism of H. B. Egerton, and the racial bigotry of Froese and Freeman ("the United States would be a great land if only every Irishman would kill a negro and be hanged for it"), must be placed the anti-imperialism of Goldwin Smith and Gilbert Murray; against the great imperialist proposals, the Liberal critics of empire. Under the spell of idealistic Idealists, Oxford promoted an idea of service and responsibility that led men to the slums of London as well as Calcutta, and of which imperialism and anti-imperialism were equally the expressions.

Neither Oxford nor the Empire possessed a sufficiently strong corporate identity to make possible Symonds's aim of assessing their reciprocal influence. Oxford cannot be isolated, as he attempts, from the society whose attitudes it shared. Kingsley as well as Ruskin shaped the opinions of late-Victorian Oxford. Above all, Oxford could make no distinctive impression upon the majority of its public-school-educated intake. Newbolt found Oxford tame after Clifton. "No position in after life, however great", as Alfred Lytton observed, "could be as complete as that of a well-learned man at Eton." Symonds disposes of such intellectual difficulties by adopting an impressionistic, anecdotal approach. The history is brief, the deeds are stirring, the great are humbled by their own absurdities, the tales inform as well as entertain. Only the potted philosophies are unsatisfactory, and they can be ignored without loss.

Making them pay for it

Roderick Floud

ALEC CAIRNCROSS
The Price of War
259pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £17.50.
0631 449198

A member of a post-war generation is always surprised by two features of total war as it was practised between 1939 and 1945. First, in the midst of war elaborate plans were made for peace and, second, those plans were based on assumptions which, with hindsight, were badly misconceived.

The desire to plan for a future after the war was both a natural sign of hope and, to some degree, a reaction to the relative lack of planning which had taken place during the First World War. This was particularly true of planning for reparations, the subject of Alec Cairncross's book. The notion of solemnly deciding, while Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union were still fighting for survival, how much, and by what means, should be extracted from a defeated Germany must have been good for morale—at least among the small group of officials and ministers who were discussing it; at the same time, such planning—

when it went well—played a part in keeping the Allies in harmony.

The explicit motives, as Sir Alec shows, were twofold. First, enough had to be extracted from Germany to provide sufficient compensation for the damage done by the war and to ensure that she was never again capable of waging such a war. Second, the unholy mess caused by reparations after the First World War had to be avoided. In broad terms, the first motive was more important to the Soviet Union, the second more important to Britain and the United States, many of whose officials, such as Keynes, had lived and worked through the interminable negotiations of Versailles and the successive reparations conferences.

As Cairncross shows, agreement was gradually reached that both ends could be served by the relatively rapid extraction of large quantities of capital equipment, both to cripple German industry and to rebuild that of the Allies. It was recognized that this would greatly depress the German standard of living in the short run, and shut her industry out of important capital-goods markets in the long. But it was expected that both ends could be achieved without the Allies paying Germany's reparations for her, through massive aid to a starving population and capital investment.

Protestors and the courts

David Pannick

JOHN DEWAR, ABDUL PALIWALA, SOL PICCIOTTO and MATTHIAS RUETE (Editors)
Nuclear Weapons, the Peace Movement and the Law
25pp. Macmillan. £27.50 (paperback, £7.95).
0331 444101

Litigation is the major growth industry of contemporary society. No problem is too personal or too profound for someone to seek a judicial resolution. In 1984-5 the United States Federal Courts were asked by the Greenham Peace Women to stop the deployment of cruise missiles in England. The claim in *Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles v Ronald Reagan* had no greater success than the 1935 application to the US Supreme Court by the man who wanted the Court to help him wage war against Turkey. The District Court judge dismissed the case on the grounds that "the courts are simply incapable of determining the effect of the missile deployment on world peace" and "the particular delicacy of foreign affairs weighs against intervention by the court". The US Court of Appeals—with the benefit of *amicus curiae* briefs from expert bodies as diverse as Printers Against Nuclear Power, the International Wages for Housework Campaign and the Council of the London Borough of Hackney—upheld the decision.

The complexity of the moral, social, political and military issues raised by nuclear weapons does not inhibit lawyers from thinking that they have at least partial solutions. The book of essays edited by John Dewar and others contains some such vain pretensions, as well as the more realistic recognition by others that Law and Peace are not happy bedfellows. These essays consider two main themes. First, is it contrary to law to develop and use nuclear weapons? Second, how has the law treated the peace movement when their paths have crossed?

Several of the essays cover the same ground in discussing what international law has to say about nuclear weapons. The only contribution of distinction in this respect is that of Adam Roberts. He clearly and persuasively explains that international law says very little directly on the subject ("in the forty years since 1945 there have been ten new international agreements on the laws of war, totalling perhaps 100,000 words, yet the words 'nuclear weapons' do not occur once in them"). However, he adds, the general principles of international law create a strong presumption against the use—particularly the first use—of such indiscriminate and dangerous weapons. Although lawyers cannot obtain injunctions to stop nuclear war, there is some value in clarifying these legal norms as one aspect of the political debate. The other contributors add

little of value to the legal analysis presented by Roberts.

Of more practical importance is the way courts have dealt with the activities of the peace movement in deciding cases of trespass, nuisance and damage to property. In an interesting contribution, the Greenham Common veteran Rebecca Johnson describes her legal experiences and reveals the mutual incomprehension of lawyers and protestors. She complains of "the courts' adamant refusal to recognize the political purpose of what we are doing". Not surprisingly, magistrates convict even though "a lesbian read her own poem of how she is treated like a monster for loving women while the real monster of inhumanity is planned inside the Greenham Common airbase, for killing millions".

One does not have to share the views of Olga Maitland to find inadequate many of the political assumptions behind some of these essays. Does Sol Picciotto really believe that there is "the broadest possible political consensus behind the pressures to enforce . . . a duty to disarm. The only counter-pressure comes from the dark side of human nature, the fear of 'the enemy'"? Much of the legal analysis is far from compelling. Abdul Paliwala—a lecturer in Law at the University of Warwick—really ought to know better than to assert, wrongly, that "the fiat of the Attorney-General is required to begin legal action against the State". Jane Hickman, a solicitor, would find it difficult to justify her rhetorical claim that "the issues of both conscience and legality are greatly clarified when a stark choice is offered between the observance of domestic laws concerning highways and property on the one hand or upholding International Law of War on the other". Ms Hickman is also unconvincing in her assessment ("on a longer perspective, it did not fail") of the Greenham Common case fought in the US courts.

The peace movement's assumption that a person's commitment to the cause should be assessed by reference to their sex ("we would have only women lawyers"—Rebecca Johnson) is well known and indefensible. What is surprising is that the editors of this volume should pander to such offensive stereotypes. They apologize for the fact that only two of their contributors are women but explain that "this will perhaps not surprise those who regard lectures and conferences as a peculiarly male way of addressing political issues".

This book demonstrates the peace movement's difficulties in deciding its approach to the law. Should it, as Rebecca Johnson suggests, "seize the legal system" and seek to use it for propaganda purposes? Or should it recognize that the law is an imprecise, dangerous and expensive weapon which is loaded against those who defy the State? There is little in this volume to suggest that lawyers can provide much assistance to those who oppose the retention of nuclear weapons.



German soldiers taken prisoner by Canadian troops in 1944: a photograph from 'The Camera at War: War photography from 1848 to the present day' by Jorge Levin (324pp., W. H. Allen, 0 491 025 485 1)

In the event, agreement was reached but, almost as soon, fell apart. The trust between allies, a fundamental hope of the wartime discussions, was soon breached. Russian ruthlessness, which accepted with equanimity a reduction of living standards in the Eastern zone to 34 per cent of its 1936 level, also quickly gave way to realism: extracting a tithe of current production was, it saw, more attractive than dismantling whole factories and trying to get them working again beyond the Urals. Britain and the United States, by contrast, felt an obligation to feed the Germans and soon came to put great emphasis—culminating in the Marshall Plan—on the reconstruction of Germany within the Western European economies. Meanwhile, pious hopes for co-operation and the eventual reunification of Germany soon faded. Cairncross exaggerates, but not too much, when he claims that "the story of reparations is also the story of how Germany and Europe came to be split in two".

Cairncross tells his story well but in a curiously bloodless way. It is a scholarly and dispassionate account by a man who, one might expect, would feel strongly about epi-

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Jacqueline Vaught Brogan

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Language difficulties

Roy Harris

ROBERT KIRK
Translation Determined
276pp. Oxford University Press. £25.
019 8249217

The number of thinkers in the course of human history who have managed to say anything fundamental or new about translation is very few: only about a dozen, according to George Steiner in *After Babel*. The last on Steiner's interesting shortlist (which begins with St Jerome) is W. V. Quine, who in 1960 launched a philosophical debate which has now raged for a quarter of a century over the "indeterminacy of translation". Quine's was a sceptical challenge, and *Translation Determined* is the latest in a long line of attempts to rebut it.

The challenge was to the idea that there can be any absolute or ultimate guarantee as to the accuracy of translation between different languages. Quine invites us to imagine a missionary-linguist in the jungle struggling with the problems of an unknown language and trying gradually to compile a dictionary of it. The linguist's archetypal puzzle, as presented by Quine, is to know whether, when the natives utter *gavagai* and point to a rabbit, it is safe to conclude that *gavagai* means "rabbit". The story becomes a little more complicated than that, but Quine's sceptical argument leads him

to the conclusion that, whatever the evidence, the linguist in the end can never be sure whether *gavagai* means "rabbit" or not. For the evidence will always in principle be compatible with other possible translations.

The *gavagai* example is a polyglot peg on which to hang a more general thesis. The general thesis also has a monoglot version which claims that the same indeterminacy applies *mutatis mutandis* to verbal equivalences within our mother tongue. Thus the translator's problem as to whether *gavagai* means "rabbit" hides a prior problem, which is what *rabbit* means. My dictionary says that *rabbit* means "wild and domesticated furred burrowing rodent of the hare family". But this definition will not satisfy the indeterminacy sceptic, who immediately points out that how the lexicographer arrived at that equivalence is open in principle to exactly the same kind of doubts as arise in the case of translating *gavagai*. Lexicographers are not born with innate knowledge of definitions: ultimately they have to infer what particular words mean from observation of how they are used. So the missionary-in-the-jungle scenario is simply a rather dramatic way of focusing on a quite general difficulty encountered in the attempt to give semantic equivalences. Our "analytic hypotheses" about what words mean are always going to be underdetermined not only by the evidence we have available but also by any possible evidence.

Thus formulated, the indeterminacy thesis is itself indeterminate inasmuch as it can be construed in a variety of ways. Part I of *Translation Determined* is devoted to determining the most plausible way of construing the thesis. Part II to the case for it, and Part III to the case against it. The case against it, in the author's view, carries the day. He condemns the indeterminacy thesis as "an aberration — a rotten plank in the Quinean ship"; but in Part IV concludes that the rot does not affect the rest of Quine's philosophy of language.

The argumentational kernel of the book comprises Chapters 10 and 11, in which the author attempts to refute Quine by showing, first, that if indeterminacy holds for the polyglot case then it must hold also for the monoglot case and, second, that it fails to hold for the monoglot case. His demonstration of both points is singularly unconvincing, involving on the one hand a science-fiction episode in which the whole population of Nottingham decide to adopt Chinese as their language, and on the other hand a comparison of language acquisition by two children brought up to speak English and Martian (which turns out to be English written backwards).

The irredeemably quixotic character of all this tiling against Quinean windmills is brought out by the ironic fact that as early as p34 the reader's attention is drawn to a particularly damaging presupposition. Mentioned in passing and then resolutely ignored, it comes down to this. In order to set up the conflict between the indeterminists and their adversaries it is necessary to bridge or fudge the difference between the theoretical task which Quine sets his hypothetical translator and the practical task which any translator actually faces in everyday life. The difference hinges on the fact

that translation in everyday life is context-dependent and there is no potential infinity of contexts. Thus, as the author of *Translation Determined* concedes, "there seems no way of actually specifying the subset of contexts in which sentence X might be translatable by sentence Y". This means that in order to meet Quine's sceptical challenge at all it has to be supposed that the translator is engaged in what is rather oddly called "pure" translation; that is, "translation of words, phrases and whole sentences which are not actually being used, and for which no special context of use is envisaged". The reader who might smell something fishy here is assured that there is nothing to worry about: pure translation is an exercise in which both "linguists and the rest of us habitually engage". Habitually? If so, we must have very curious habits. They sound like the habits of people who mistake bilingual dictionaries for models of translation, instead of the mere tools of translation which they in fact are: of people who have been brainwashed by currently fashionable semantic theories into believing that the meaning of an expression is a decontextualized invariant which nevertheless magically accompanies the expression wherever that expression goes.

If the grotesque concept of pure translation had been given the short shrift it deserves, this book could have ended on page 35. Then it would have cost less and also had the great merit of exposing the bogus terms in which the indeterminacy debate is couched. The futility of that debate — immediately obvious to anyone but a professional philosopher — reflects the incoherence of the underlying assumption that translation could, or ideally should, be conceptualized as a semantically neutral process.

Meetings with reality

Marie McGinn

BRUCE AUNE
Metaphysics
235pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £22.50 (paperback, £6.95).
0631 147624

The trend of much recent analytical philosophy has been against the idea that philosophers are in the business of constructing a theory of reality, or even of providing a foundation for the theory of reality that science or common sense constructs. These traditional tasks of metaphysics have tended to be replaced by a concern to understand how language, the medium in which our conception of the world is expressed, functions, its relation to our history and to our own peculiar nature and interests, and by a concern carefully to illuminate some of the philosophically interesting concepts that it deals in. This new understanding of the aims of a central part of philosophy expresses a general recognition that the a priori method of philosophers makes us and our language (or concepts of the world) the natural objects of study.

At first blush, Bruce Aune's book is an attempt to reverse this anti-metaphysical trend and reinstate the idea (never entirely dead) that philosophy can, and should, perform the essentially transcendental task of locating the precise points at which language and reality meet. Even for those who accept the "linguistic turn", there is still a question of whether reference to (or quantification over) objects of a given category, in a formal semantic theory for a language, is philosophically warranted. However, the issues here are thought to be about whether there are sufficiently clear criteria of identity for the objects concerned, whether there is unnecessary duplication of categories, whether the theorist's desire to avoid "bizarre" entities is satisfied, and so on. For Professor Aune, on the other hand, the central question is whether, in some absolute sense, the being or existence of entities of a given category is fundamental or derived.

The first half of Aune's book is spent defending the claim that physical continuants make up the "fundamental existents" of the world, and that reference to physical continuants is the fundamental point of contact between language and reality. Events, properties, abstract

objects in general, are all held to be "logical fictions" existing only derivatively, as qualifications of physical continuants; whatever meaning statements involving "reference" to such entities have is held to be dependent upon the possibility of interpreting them as statements which involve direct reference only to continuants.

Aune's position is worked out in opposition to the view of Russell, that the fundamental existents are events (or momentary sense data). His discussion of the issues, and his presentation of Russell's views, is at all times lucid and cogent. Aune's taste for metaphysics is not in the least associated (as it sometimes is) with a liking for what is, from the point of view of common sense, bizarre or paradoxical. Aune seems to have the wholly admirable belief that the metaphysics of common sense should at least be recognizable to common sense.

The boldness of Aune's claim for the possibilities of metaphysics is, however, compromised somewhat by his willingness to acknowledge that it is science, and not common sense, that must determine what has fundamental and what merely derived existence. Aune believes that science could force a revision in the metaphysical picture derived from the analysis of our everyday outlook. But since it seems clear that future science might also force a revision in any metaphysical picture derived from current science, just as current science forced a revision of earlier science, all justification for treating the logical analysis of any particular area of discourse, at any particular point in our history, as "fitt[ing] the true and ultimate structure of reality" seems undermined. The need to acknowledge that our view of the world is prone to error, and that no view can assume a privileged status, invites the conclusion that there simply is no route from a theory of what we are currently talking about to a theory of what is ultimately real.

In the second half of the book Aune discusses Davidson's views on meaning and interpretation, the appearance/reality distinction, and freedom and determinism. These chapters are less good than the earlier ones, and although Aune provides an adequate introduction to the topics, his own views are often insufficiently motivated and sometimes rather dull. However, none of this detracts from the fact that, judged as a whole, Aune's book provides a lucid introduction to the subject.

Fewer but less far between

Peter Hebblethwaite

ADRIAN HASTINGS
A History of English Christianity, 1920-1985
720pp. Collins. £25.
0007152118

"Clergy of the Hastings type", remarks the author of *A History of English Christianity, 1920-1985*, "were not promoted." Yet for 125 years Hastings were Rectors of Martley, Worcestershire, and engaged in the typical occupations of the country vicar: "Cricket, rowing, fishing, railway timetables, a little polo, bell-ringing." Adrian Hastings enjoys his joke and does not reveal that these were his ancestors. But as he became a Roman Catholic priest and is now Professor of Theology at Leeds University, it remains true that "clergy of the Hastings type are not promoted". He also has an Anglican wife.

So in many ways Professor Hastings is admirably suited to write trans or post-denominational history. He also has an uncommon knowledge of the Free Churches. He knows that the Congregational Church at Carr Lane, Birmingham, was once described as "one of the commanding ecclesiastical positions of the British Empire" and "the Vatican of Independency". Moving to the present, he rightly points out the growing importance of the Black Churches and the Orthodox Church. But his main argument reposes on Anglican-Roman relations. He was an early member of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC).

Yet William Temple, later Archbishop of Canterbury, said in 1933: "Some day, no doubt, in a very remote future, the question of union with Rome will become practical. At present I regard it as almost infinitely remote." One of Hastings's major themes is that by 1985 the mirage of 1933 appeared, if not within grasp, at least graspable. There is a subtext: that the history of "English Christianity", despite its doleful tale of divisions and hostilities, is fundamentally one history. Debatable in regard to earlier centuries, Hastings's account is designed to show that this judgment certainly fits this century, and that the congruence, however patchy, remains a great achievement to be offset against growing secularization and the evidence of statistical decline.

Indeed, he even advances the theory ("arguably") that religion is now "more influential as a distinct force of motivation and mobilisation than had been the case for many a year". This is because the Church of England has rid itself of the grosser burdens of Establishment, if not of the thing itself. It has become self-governing in Synod; in effect it appoints its own bishops; it demonstrated its independence in the Falklands Service at St Paul's and by *Faith in the City* (denounced as "Marxist" by no less an authority than Norman Tebbit).

It is important to see these moves as part of a steady process. *Faith in the City* was in continuity with the Bishops' Report of 1918, *Christianity and Industrial Problems* (drafted largely by R. H. Tawney and William Temple). A British Council of Churches study, *Britain Today and Tomorrow*, written by Canon Trevor Beeson, remarkably prophesied "Social Democracy with a human face" as a remedy for the ills of the nation in 1978.

A theory of convergence between Rome and Canterbury is at work here. In the early years of the century Anglo-Catholics taught Anglicans to make the Eucharist the central act of worship; and they held that sacramental practice ought to have social consequences. Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar, summed it up at the Anglo-Catholic Congress of 1923: "You cannot claim to worship Jesus in the Tabernacle, if you do not pity Jesus in the slum. . . . It is folly — it is madness — to suppose that you can worship Jesus in the Sacraments and on the throne of glory, when you are sweating him in the souls and bodies of his children." Nor is this just a party point, for Evangelicals at Keele in 1967 "determined to work towards the practice of the weekly celebration of the Sacrament as the central corporate service of the Church". The social dimension followed. "Evangelicalism", John Stott told the second Evangelical Congress at Nottingham in 1977, "ought to be conservative on the Bible, and radical on everything else."

Meantime, Roman Catholics were becoming honorary Anglicans, thanks to Cardinal Basil Hume (whose public-school and Oxford background made him more like an Anglican Bishop than any of his predecessors) and the influence of the educated laity who were "simply taking over larger and larger chunks of Church activity". They were taking over the teaching of theology, for example. Hence the

conclusion, "There was a growing, perhaps alarming, contrast between a highly educated and theologically aware minority among the laity and a clergy which increasingly lacked even a handful of brilliant figures, such as it had in the past, and seemed in places to be semi-literate." That, incidentally, is another reason why clergy of the Hastings type are unlikely to be promoted.

One might expect Hastings to be tough on RCs and ecumenically tender on everyone else. But not a bit of it. Thus Dean Inge, who had a column in the *Evening Standard*, illustrates a characteristic type of Anglican silliness: "the tendency of the upper class cleric to pontificate about matters on which he is a complete amateur". Inge used to write about the "servant problem" and "eugenics" — by which he meant that the lower orders should have fewer children.

Hastings sees Don Cupitt as another Inge. In his book *Taking Leave of God* (1980), Cupitt committed himself to "objective atheism". This theology, remarks Hastings savagely, "might take leave of God but not of well-endowed canons or deaneries". It has no social message whatsoever, he says, genocidal towards Latin American liberation theology. Moreover, "a Church which can produce no reasoned exposition of its faith stronger than what the dominant theologians of the seventies were able to muster" has no future at all. The C of E is particularly vulnerable to "collapse due to intellectual bankruptcy".

RCs do not 'scape a whipping either. Successive Archbishops of Westminster are given the treatment. Cardinal Griffin was "a hard-working nonentity". His successor, Godfrey, was known to his priests as "the safe period" and his obituary in *The Times* noted that he "had never made an imprudent remark in his life". One may add that he had a tray on his desk marked LBW ("Let the buggers wait"). For the much-vaunted ecumenist Heenan the C of E was not so much "attacked as set aside as a meaningless old doddler". Cardinal Hume is pictured as too obedient a Benedictine to do what Hastings requires:

There can be no hope whatsoever for Christian reunion, if Catholic bishops have not the courage to stand against the pope, even publicly, not so much about doctrine as the manner of papal government, the creeping advance of monarchy over collegiality, the intolerance of ultramontanism.

Ultramontanism — *volla l'ennemi*. It is doubtful whether Hume's case for the gradual implementation of Vatican II is greatly helped by this incitement to episcopal mutiny. But I neglect a hundred felicities in this provocatively written book. It is not in the least clerically dominated. The novels of Anthony Burgess and David Lodge are as important to Adrian Hastings as the work of professional theologians. He seems to have read everything and forgotten nothing. In the darkness of 1942 he discerns William Temple's *Christianity and the Social Order*, *The Judgement of Nations* by Christopher Dawson, *The Man Born to be King* by Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Screwtape Letters* by C. S. Lewis and T. S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*. "This was a time", he concludes, "of considerable literary creativity but of a very unsecular sort." It also adumbrates the future that he evidently dreams about.

Some random comments. The anecdote about Heenan and the two imaginary football teams, one of progressives, the other of conservatives, had Heenan playing a centre-back for both sides (not centre-forward). Archbishop "Tommy" Roberts never spoke at the Vatican Council not because he was forbidden to (as he assured everyone), but because he knew that a press conference with an ostensibly harnessed speech (ins, for example, on Franz Jägerstätter, the Austrian conscientious objector) would be far more effective. Though ordained in Rome, Hastings is not strong on Italian affairs, and caricatures Pius XII and Paul VI. It is fascinating to learn that Owen Chadwick is said to have turned down Canterbury in 1974. It is instructive that Mrs Thatcher had to rewrite St Francis's prayer (which the man from Assisi didn't write anyway) before reciting it on the steps of Number 10 in 1979. At the same time, one wonders how Hastings votes. He sounds rather like his arch-enemy, Edward Norman, when he opines: "To criticize Mrs Thatcher was easy enough, to formulate a truly alternative policy acceptable to the majority of the nation seemed beyond the abilities of her critics."

As can be seen, one of the book's venial weaknesses is that the more it approaches the present, the more it exchanges history for journalism, of a particularly editorializing kind. Clergy of the Hastings type may not get promotion, but they keep one's spirits up north of the Alps.

YALE

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Sales of books and MSS

H. R. Woudhuysen

Next week is a busy one in the auction rooms with Sotheby's and Christie's both holding important sales: this coincidence of timing is perhaps unfortunate as libraries and collectors may find their resources heavily stretched by the high quality of the material which is coming up for sale.

Sotheby's begins the week on December 2 with its autumn sale of Western manuscripts and miniatures. The catalogue comprises only seventy-four lots, but their pre-sale higher estimates suggest that they will fetch just over one and a quarter million pounds. The outstanding item in the sale is a Book of Hours of c1412 from the workshop of the Boucicaut Master. This volume, which is still in its medieval binding, is probably the last example of the Master's work which will ever come on the market and is estimated at £200,000-£300,000. Three other manuscripts are in the £100,000-£150,000 range. The first is a lavishly decorated late thirteenth-century Latin Bible, probably made in Rouen, and full of lively details. It may well have been the first medieval manuscript Sotheby's ever sold (going for £365 0d in 1745) and was later in the collections of (among others) Count MacCarthy, the Duke of Sussex, C. H. St John Hornby and Major Ashby. Next comes a slightly later Book of Hours produced at Liège in about 1310, which contains nine full-page miniatures and is still in its original binding. Finally there is a mid-fifteenth century Book of Hours illuminated with twenty-three large miniatures, by the painter known after his patron as the Coctivy Master, who worked in the Loire valley, perhaps at Tours.

Other items in the sale may not be expected to reach such fantastic prices but are still of considerable interest. Perhaps the most striking of these is a very early medical text, the *Liber Passionalis*, ascribed to Galienus, which was copied in Italy in about 1200 and may have belonged to the Florentine humanist and book collector Coluccio Salutati. The book is estimated at £15,000-£20,000. Provenance is also of some significance in respect of a Latin Bible written in England during the second half of the thirteenth century: this is the only manuscript known to come from the secular college of St Michael at South Malling in Sussex, being presented to the Dean there in 1492 (estimate £4,000-£6,000).

On the morning of the next day, Christie's are selling French illustrated books and almanacs which largely come from the collection of Sir David Salomons. The miniature almanacs, most of which are in contemporary and elaborate bindings, may not be to everybody's taste, but they do form a remarkable assembly which it is hard to imagine will ever be put together again on such a scale. Among the illustrated material are six volumes of mainly French ephemera (estimate £6,000-£8,000) and ten volumes containing over 1,000 portraits and engravings to the life and works of Voltaire (estimate £2,000-£3,000).

In the afternoon of the same day Christie's are selling autograph letters, historical docu-

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 305
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than December 19. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers (in which case, inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration). Entries, marked "Author, Author 305" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on December 26.

1 Love of thy father me through scars did guide:
On seas I bore thee, and on seas I died.
I did; and for my winding-sheet a wave
I had, and all the ocean for my grave.

2 They fought with God's child -
And they could not and fell to the deck
(Crushed them) or water (drowned them) or milled
With the sea-rump over the wreck.

3 They sleep well here
These fisher-folk who passed their anxious days
In fierce Atlantic ways;
And found not there
Beneath the lung curled wave,
So quiet a grave.

ments and musical manuscripts. This sale contains a great deal of first rate and attractive material. The star item in it is undoubtedly an album containing nine pen-and-ink drawings by Lewis Carroll to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. These drawings were given by Carroll to Alice Liddell and their authorship came to be wrongly attributed to Sir John Tenniel, although they differ in several significant ways from his published pictures to the first *Alice*: for example, in Carroll's drawing the Mad Hatter's Tea Party is combined with a picture of the Cheshire Cat. These illustrations have an unpublished estimate of £120,000-£150,000.

For the rest the sale is particularly rich in Elizabethan and Jacobean manuscripts including several lots comprising letters to Matthew Hutton (1529-1606), Archbishop of York. There are some unpublished items of which the most important is Sir Thomas Hobbes's letter-book containing copies in his hand of nineteen letters written during the first part of 1566 while he was ambassador in France: three of the letters are otherwise unknown.

More modern literary manuscripts include some unusual items. A series of eleven letters from writers such as Robert Graves, William Golding and W. H. Auden replying to a request for their impressions of T. S. Eliot's character and ranging from the sympathetic (Auden) to the wildly antipathetic (Graves) are estimated at £800-£1,200. In three autograph letters to Robert Barr written from America and Torquay in 1896-7 Kipling shows himself in an embattled mood after various attacks on him: "I've been accused of ill treating my wife and brutally overworking my horses besides being continuously drunk all the time I was in Chicago; as well as elaborately insulting the whole of the Author's Club of N' York" (estimate £500-£800). There are some good laterwood letters, some unpublished. T. E. Lawrence material and, estimated at £40,000-£50,000, the first draft autograph manuscript of Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*.

The rest of the week is taken up by a general sale at Bloomsbury Book Auctions of luncheon on December 4 and by Sotheby's two-day sale on December 4 and 5 of illustrated and children's books and drawings. There are some fine Continental illustrated and private press books in this sale, with an almost complete set of Kelmscott Press books and an unusual array of the productions of the Pear Tree Press. Among the drawings sixteen late watercolours by Kate Greenaway to illustrate *The April Baby's Book of Tunes* (estimate £40,000-£60,000) and two terrifying Arthur Rackham watercolours (both estimated at £10,000-£15,000) stand out. First editions of both of the *Alice* books are expected to go for £8,000-£12,000, and finally a superb Cobden-Sanderson binding ("dark brown morocco gilt, the covers with eleven stylized flowers arranged at edges and centre, interwoven with leafy sprays, title and foliate decoration within compartments of spine") reflects renewed interest in his work as a designer and finisher of bindings and is estimated at £4,000-£6,000.

Competition No 301
Winner: Christopher Burnett
Answers:

1 My aunt was a tall, hard-featured lady, but by no means ill-looking. There was an inflexibility in her face, in her voice, in her gait and carriage, amply sufficient to account for the effect she had made upon a gentle creature like my mother; but her features were rather handsome than otherwise, though unbending and austere. I particularly noticed that she had a very quick, bright eye.

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, chapter 15.
2 It was, as I recognised with some difficulty from a photograph in the family album, my Aunt - who had arrived late, dressed rather as the late Queen Mary of beloved memory might have dressed if she had still been with us and had adapted herself a little bit towards the present mode. I was surprised by her brilliant red hair, monumentally piled, and her two big front teeth which gave her a vital countenance.

Graham Greene, *Travels with my Aunt*, chapter 1.
3 My aunt, who looked rather like the well-known bust of Julius Caesar except that she had a lot of white hair and wore a top of it that in the fashion of 1911, used to march about among her guests in a military manner, carrying a mauve parasol which she did not open but used to emphasise points she was making in the interest of ease.
Clara Cockburn, *Cloud*, chapter 4.

The Opie Appeal

The names of Peter and Iona Opie are almost synonymous with the study of children. For forty years the Opies investigated and described the world of childhood in such famous and pioneering books as *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* and *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*. They also collected books about the subject and assembled a library of twelve thousand printed books as well as thousands of chapbooks, comics and children's magazines. This huge assembly of material has now been offered to the Bodleian Library, Oxford, which is keen to acquire the collection, but needs to find £500,000 to purchase it at half its professionally valued price of one million pounds. An appeal has been launched under the patronage of the Prince of Wales.

The Opie collection is probably the finest still in private hands and has often contributed to exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic. It is particularly strong in eighteenth-century children's books, such as the possibly unique two volumes of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, 1706, and the first collection of nursery rhymes to have been published in America, *The Famous Tommy Thumb's Little Story Book*, of about 1760. But it also includes many

rare nineteenth-century books and association copies, and extends into this century with, for example, a complete set of the Puffin Picture Books and a copy of the first printing of *Watership Down*. If the Bodleian is successful in acquiring the Opie library (which would nicely complement its holdings of juvenilia in the Douce collection), it would probably become the leading centre in this country for the study of children's books, outside the Renier and Linden collections which are part of the library of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Even at a time when universities and libraries are short of ready money it would be particularly sad if the fruits of this very English enthusiasm were to leave the country: the opportunity to acquire such a remarkable collection at such a reasonable price will never occur again.

Generous private sponsors, the Bodleian, the Friends of the Bodleian, Oxford Colleges and Oxford University Press have all made contributions. The organizers of the appeal, Gillian Avery and Hugo Brunner, are arranging fund-raising events in Oxford for later this year. Donations to the appeal can be sent via the Friends of the Bodleian, the Bodleian Library, Oxford: cheques should be made out to the Friends of the Bodleian Opie Appeal.

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Isabel Armstrong is Professor of English at the University of Southampton.
Jonathan Barnes is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, and editor of the *Oxford Translation of Aristotle*, 1982.

Edward Blahen's *A Second Skin*, the eighth volume of his autobiography, was published in 1984.
Keith Brown is Professor of English at the University of Oslo.

Norman Bryson is a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. His latest book is *Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix*, 1984.

John Butt is a lecturer in Spanish at King's College, London. His books include *Writers and Politics in Modern Spain*, 1979. He is working on a new reference grammar of modern Spanish which will be published next year.
John Campbell's books include *Roy Jenkins: A Biography*, 1983. His *Nye Bevan and the Hinge of British Socialism* will be published next year.

Raymond Carr is Warden of St Antony's College, Oxford. His books include *The Spanish Tragedy: The Civil War in perspective*, 1977, and *Modern Spain*, 1980.

Charles Causley's collection of new nursery rhymes, *Early in the Morning*, is published this week.
A. J. Close is a lecturer in Spanish at the University of Cambridge and author of *The Romantic Approach to 'Don Quixote': A critical history of the Romantic tradition in 'Quixote' criticism*, 1978.

Russell Davies was formerly Film Critic of the *Observer* and is the presenter of BBC2's *Saturday Review*. He is writing a book on the cartoonist Vicky.

Kate Flint is a Fellow of Mansfield College, Oxford.
Roderick Floud is Professor of Modern History at Birkbeck College, London, and a Research Programme Director of the Centre for Economic Policy Research. He is co-editor of *The Economic History of Britain since 1700*, 1981.

John Gigg's most recent book, *Lloyd George: From peace to war 1912-1916*, was published last year.
Ray Harris is Professor of General Linguistics at the University of Oxford. His most recent book is *The Origin of Writing*, which was published earlier this year. He was awarded the Scott Moncrieff prize for his translation of *Don Quixote: A critical history of the Romantic tradition in 'Quixote' criticism*, 1978.

Henry Kamen is the author of *Spain 1469-1714: A society in conflict*, 1983. His *Inquisition and Society in Spain in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* was published last year.

Grevel Lindop is a lecturer in English at the University of Manchester. His new collection of poems, *Tourists*, will be published next year.

Marie McGinn lectures in Philosophy at the University of York.

David McKitterick is Librarian at Trinity College, Cambridge. His *Cambridge University Library, A History: The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

Michael O'Neill lectures in English at the University of Durham and is co-editor of *Poetry Durham*.
David Parnick is a barrister and a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. He is the author of *Judicial Review of the Death Penalty*, 1982. His *Judges* will be published next year.

Carol Rumens's most recent collection of poems, *Direct Dialling*, was published last year.

Paul Smith is Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton.
Sir John Summerson's books include *The Classical Language of Architecture*, 1964, which was published in a revised edition in 1980.

Alan Rykes is a lecturer in Modern History at the University of St Andrews. He is the author of *Torricelli's Reform in British Politics, 1603-1613*, 1979.

Andrew Wawn lectures in English at the University of Leeds.

Jennifer Westwood's book *Albion: A guide to legendary Britain* was published last year.

This week in the
London Review
OF BOOKS

E. P. Thompson: Subduing the jury
Craig Raine on Joe Orton's diaries
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CHILDREN'S BOOKS

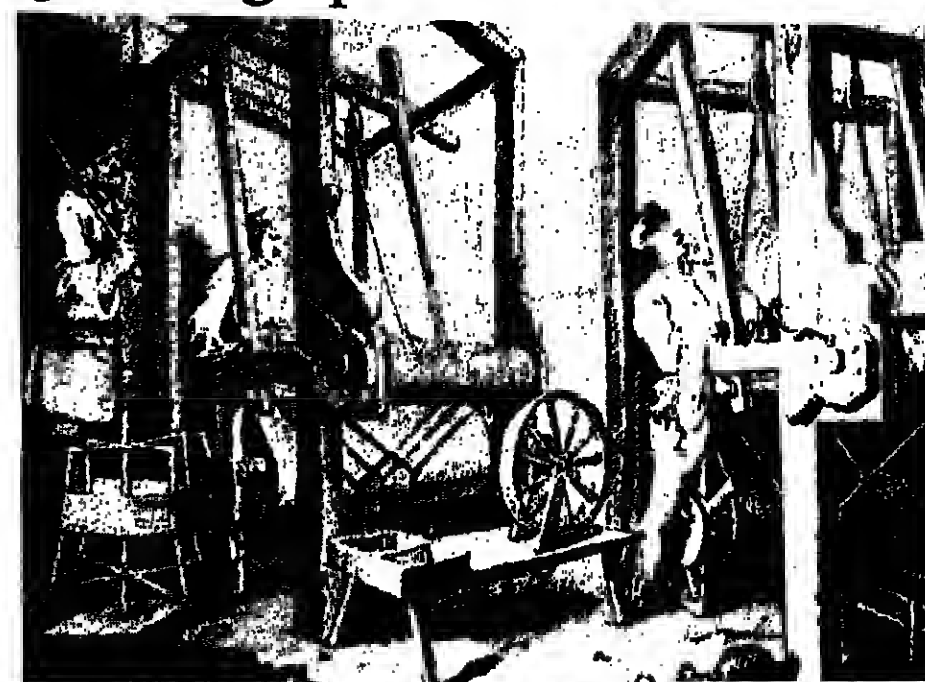
The charivari of growing up

Paul Smith

JOHN SPRINGHALL
Crowing of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960
270pp, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, £30.
07171 10125

Is "adolescence" in its twentieth-century formulations an artificial construct of psychiatrists and social workers, the media and the marketing men, all drumming up trade? In *Crowing of Age: Adolescence in Britain 1860-1960*, John Springhall argues the inadequacy of a purely "psycho-biological" view of adolescence, in particular that version which defines it primarily as a necessary ordeal of "storm and stress". There is, he insists, little "social-scientific" evidence to show that any but a small minority of those in the relevant age group experience the acute identity crisis and profound emotional turbulence sometimes thought of as constituting the meaning of adolescence. Problems connected with the pains of puberty and changes in the sense of self-identity there are, but Springhall inclines to those theories which see them as typically spaced out over the adolescent years in such a way as to make piecemeal adjustment possible and to avoid a climactic crisis. Nor is he much impressed by the idea of adolescence as an acute stage of generational conflict, citing research which suggests that British adolescents in the 1960s (LSE students notwithstanding) more commonly identified with parents than with peers and "had already internalised the ideals and values of the surrounding adult society". Stripped of spurious psycho-biological drama and dubious paradigms of rebellion, adolescence becomes for Springhall primarily a matter of "a cultural definition of a certain stage in the cycle which needs to be placed in a proper historical perspective".

The historical perspective here is derived mainly from the study of British youth (mostly male) between the ages of about twelve and twenty, comporting itself in work, leisure and crime in the late Victorian and Edwardian years. A final chapter on the Teddy boys and teenagers of the 1950s, when the concept of adolescence is held to have "come of age" in the description of distinctive youth subcultures, seems a bit detached from what goes before, as though the publisher had asked for something to give the book a more contemporary relevance. Even so, the topic is vast, and Springhall does not claim to be doing more than assemble some of the basic materials from which a narrative history of adolescence in modern Britain might eventually be written. A major difficulty in his ambition to "provide adolescence with its own voice in the past" lies in "the non-participant, often adult, middle-class nature of much of the surviving printed evidence before 1914". The disappointed use of "middle-class" here signifies a choice to leave largely on one side the considerable body of material relating to middle and upper-class



A preliminary drawing by William Hogarth for industry and idleness, a series of nine engravings published in 1747; from *Sing a Song for Slopence: The English picture-book tradition* and Randolph Caldecott, an exhibition of children's picture books at the British Library until January 25. The catalogue to the exhibition, by Brian Alderson, is published by Cambridge University Press (122pp, £25, 0 521 33760 7).

youth and to write the history essentially of working-class adolescence.

Historians, nearly all middle-class themselves, tend to divide in their professional labours into social climbers and slummers. Springhall is a slummer, more interested in the penny gaffs than in the playing fields of Eton as forcing-houses of adolescence. But public schoolboys sometimes left diaries (one or two of them quoted here); crossing sweepers did not. Some good use is made of oral record and of those contemporary observers who did their best to transcribe working-class experience directly into their notebooks, but inevitably the unmediated voice of the errand boy or the skivvy is only partially and patchily available. Like it or not, this is another middle-class adult rendering of what it was like to be working-class and young.

Though a chapter on changing concepts of adolescence glances at some recognized and self-conscious stages of youth in the early modern period - apprenticeship and putting out to service, romantic self-location - Springhall really begins with the mid-nineteenth century in Britain, when it can be argued that the growth of the public school system tended to institutionalize a distinct adolescent stage among the middle and upper classes, and that the increasing attention of social reformers to questions of juvenile employment, character formation, and delinquency produced a parallel but very different categorization of adolescence for the working classes. The former development gets fairly short shrift. Springhall's interest is in the latter, or rather in its subject-matter, and is developed with much fascinating detail. A full economic, social and pedagogical history of working-class adolescence could not

probably under-represents its potential for emotional turbulence, or at least anxiety. A seventeenth-century preacher whom he quotes warned his youthful audience that sin "hath in your age more instruments to bring it to outward appearance, as flourishing wit to invent and dexterity in other members to put it in execution". And sin aside, Springhall is short on the acute and the angst of adolescence, on such powerful drives as sexuality, need for group identification, and taste for more or less ritualized violence. "Storm and stress" may be atypical, but the potential was always there, and its realization or lack of it has surely much to do with the presence or absence of a facilitating environment. Is it possible that much nineteenth-century working-class adolescence appeared relatively unproblematic because, in a society still approximating in practice more to a "status" than a "market" model, the choice of roles and identities was limited or non-existent and the openings for anxiety and despair correspondingly restricted? Was it different later for adolescents to whom increasing prosperity and social mobility offered greater appearance of choice at the same time as the Bomb threatened to annihilate them? If adolescence is, to take what Springhall presents as an accepted definition, "the period during which a young person learns who he or she is and what he or she really feels", its emotional expression has to be precisely related to the balance between biological and psychological drives and the possibilities of being and modes of feeling which particular social situations make available.

The view of adolescence, or at least adolescent leisure activity, as charivari, more or less self-conscious celebration of a licensed breathing space between the restraints of childhood and the assumption of full adult responsibilities ("Between leaving school and going into the Army", wrote George Melly of post-1945 teenage youths, "they could live out a fantasy life, their pockets full of money from a dead-end job") deserves greater emphasis. It helps to point up two of the most vital characteristics of adolescence, the temporary assumption of distinctive styles of behaviour and the imminence of entry into adult life, both of which - not just the first - constitute a threat to adults whose impact Springhall perhaps underestimates. His scepticism about generational conflict may be overdue. On the whole, he is ready to see parents, teachers, youth leaders, employers, not as agents of social control engaged in repressing the young but rather as "agents of socialization preparing them for their future roles as citizens in a society to which most adolescents gave unthinking and willing allegiance". Leaving aside the question of the difference between "socialization" and "control", this waves away the profound tension between adolescents and their elders, which is based as much on generational as on social factors and operative even where no overt clash of values or display of rejection exists.

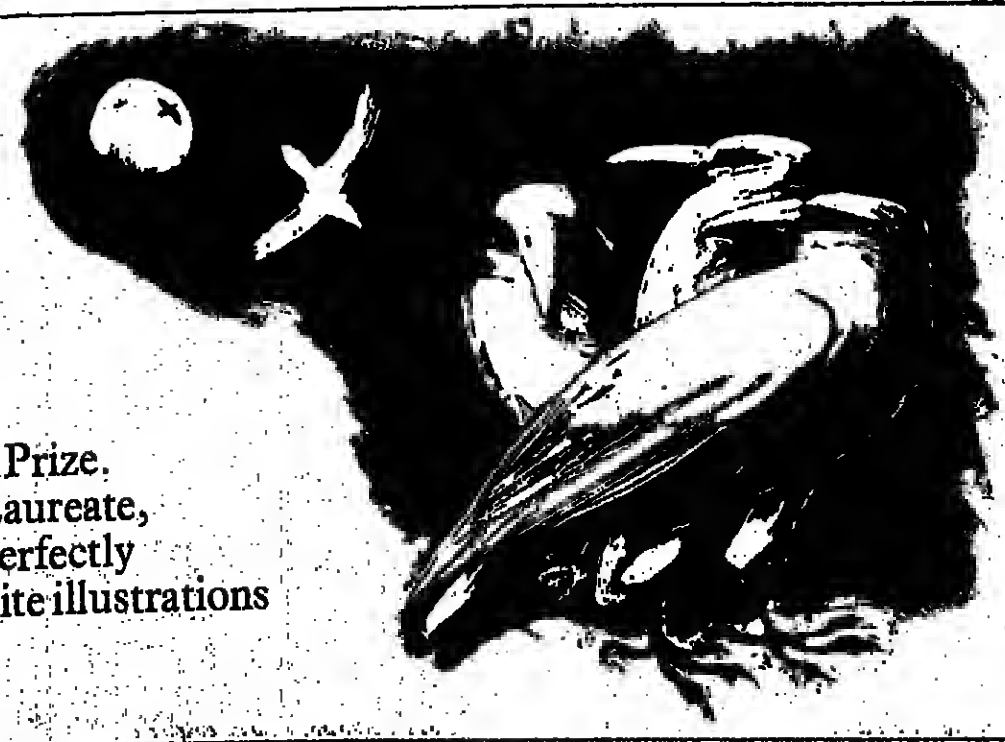
Some of the elements of that tension are

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THE BODLEY HEAD



appears in Springhall's evidence. The bishop of Birmingham's domestic chaplain, condemning in 1914 "the influence of the crowd, the suggestiveness of the performance and the spectacular appeal to his excitement or emotionalism" which assaulted the working-class youth in the cheaper music-halls, was expressing not only a conventional middle-class concern about moral welfare but the largely unconscious envy that adults entertain of the freedom and exuberance of the young, an envy sharpened by the certain knowledge that this privileged age group will shortly begin to supersede its elders, the terms of the relationship turning inexorably, if slowly, in its favour. To some degree the tension is exhibited in that family life which Springhall recognizes as a basic formative influence in adolescence but which he does not seek to analyse. It spills over, however, into the streets, the arena of the working-class and even middle-class young, conspicuously and alarmingly overrun by them in the last century, as Springhall notes, because of their very large share of the total population. Springhall describes the anxiety of the police "to make the pavements fit for the urban middle class to promenade along - by depriving them of all signs of life and activity".

Adolescent appeal

Carol Rumens

JUDY BLUME
Letters to Judy: What kids wish they could tell you
287pp, Heinemann, £10.95.
0434078409

Every voluntary reader of fiction is no doubt self-searching to some degree, but the adolescent reader is particularly so. Provided it is open-minded, such reading entails deep imaginative contact. If a book isn't felt as some kind of personal, emotional discovery, it isn't read, but dead. Lucky the adolescent for whom the O or A level text turns out to be the set book of his or her soul.

Modern children for whom *Macbeth* doesn't quite fill the bill may turn to *Blubber* or *Are you there, God? It's me, Margaret* by Judy Blume, the American writer whose emotional "how-to" books for the under-sixteens are extremely popular on both sides of the Atlantic. Such books may require no great imaginative efforts from their readers, but they are far from stupid or dishonest. They faithfully re-create the realities of school and family life in good, brisk, colloquial prose. Anxieties are sensitively explored, and if the context is generally optimistic, it nevertheless retains a sense of uncertainty and flux as well as possibility; the false pink glow of happily-ever-after is usually nicely muted, if not avoided altogether.

All this began in the 1970s (and derives from 1960s barricade-storming as plainly as the surveys of Masters and Johnson do); by now it has become a minor industry. Two recent heirs are

But he recognizes that it was as much a respectable working-class as a respectable middle-class desire to discipline, guide and contain as long as possible a youth inevitably destined to displace and humiliate its mentors.

Where class perhaps most predominated over generational factors in the form taken by the struggle of adults to keep their grip was in the way in which attempts were made to harness late Victorian and Edwardian youth to the juggernaut of "national efficiency". Commenting on the lengthy debate as to whether the profusion of "dead-end" jobs for working-class adolescents tended to turn them into a reservoir of casual and unskilled labour, the founder of the Boys' Brigade, William Smith, declared: "The 'Boy problem' is much discussed in its relation to the great question of unemployment", but "the more serious questions of Boy Life need to be discussed as thoroughly, if the race is to maintain its supremacy". The youth institutes and clubs, the cadet corps, the industrial and reformatory schools whose development Springhall expertly chronicles, were to help curb degeneracy and breed a stock fit to maintain the Empire against the pressures of economic and military competition and the corrosion of social disharmony.

Paula Danziger and Norma Klein, a number of whose books have been brought out by Heinemann this year. The woe that is in marriage, and family life in general, comes through relentlessly in the work of both these authors, the mother's struggle for her own growth and autonomy often providing an interesting extra dimension, as in Klein's *Mom, the Wolf Man and Me* and Danziger's *Con you Sue your Parents for Malpractice?* I wonder, though, if they speak as intimately to their young readers as those of Blume.

Letters to Judy spells out the extent, and the pathos, of the response. "Some of your books almost tell my life", writes Emma, a black girl bullied by her white class-mates; "I feel you're writing about me" is indeed the refrain, and on both sides of the Atlantic. But of course this isn't simply a collection of fan-mail; invariably, the correspondents go on to describe problems of their own, adding that they "can't talk" to their parents. It appears that, while teenagers have always tended to suffer crises of one sort or another, the modern, two-generation family structure cruelly intensifies their sense of isolation. Parents are more likely to change partners, too, emerging from unassailable but comforting distance to become their children's sexual equals and rivals. None of the problems described could be termed trivial, least of all from the child's point of view, but some are more extreme than others, however casual the phrasing: "My mother was arrested for child abuse. She beat me and my heart stopped."

A number of the children suggest plots for further books, with touching apologies for "being pushy"; but of course the real need is to tell their own stories to a trusted listener. ("I

This was perhaps more a middle-class than a working-class cause, the dissemination of which was aided by the middle-class grip on the educational system, juvenile literature, and boys' and girls' organizations. It is understandable that the teaching of the board schools, left behind as adolescence was beginning, is not discussed, but more than five pages might have been devoted to what adolescents read, especially if Robert Roberts, in a passage quoted by Springhall, was right to suggest that "Frank Richards during the first quarter of the twentieth century had more influence on the mind and outlook of young working-class England than any other single person, not excluding Baden-Powell". The popular boys' literature Springhall mentions (did girls, ignored here, read it too?) came from various sources. Probably the *Boy's Own Paper*, a canny and improving venture of the Religious Tract Society, was less avidly consumed in mean streets than the "penny dreadfuls" turned out by faintly Captain Grimes figures like Brett, who published the Jack Harkaway stories, or than Harmsworth's halfpenny papers such as the *Union Jack*. But all of them were middle-class productions, and it would be interesting to know how far they impressed a coherent set of

will keep writing to you... will tell you one problem per letter." Judy Blume, who trained as a teacher before she became a writer, makes a sensible and friendly guru. A trace of encounter-group jargon does not exceed the acceptable and the references to her own experiences as a child, a mother and a twice-divorced wife are easy and candid. Though she does not include her answering letters, the tone of her comments suggests their character, its genuine concern. Sometimes, when the correspondence has been sustained over a lengthy period, the letters have been put together to form "stories". At the same time, the writer is always alert to an emergency, urging counsellors and suicide hotlines if necessary. A list of support groups and their telephone numbers is included in an appendix which, entitled "resources", might justifiably bear as its sub-

Hits and misses

Jessica Yates

KEITH BARKER
In the Realm of Gold: The story of the Carnegie Medal
61pp, Julia MacRae, £4.95.
0962032601

The oldest of the British children's book awards is the gold medal named after Andrew Carnegie. Established by the Library Association in honour of the centenary of Carnegie's birth, it made its first award to Arthur Ransome's *Pigeon Post*, in 1937. The selection of the winner was originally made by school librarians, and in the *Realms of Gold* describes how professional children's librarians campaigned to have a say in the choice. The winning novel, no longer "the best book" but "an outstanding book", is now chosen by a committee of children's librarians from all parts of Britain, armed with a set of detailed printed criteria which cover characterization, style and plot ("apart from fantasy and magical themes, a solving of the problem by agencies hitherto unrelated to the plot is not considered acceptable") and co-ordinated by the Youth Libraries Group of the Library Association.

Keith Barker has condensed his thesis on the Carnegie Medal into a shortish, informally written book for the general reader, whom I take to be a teacher or parent. Barker introduces us to the debates over the medal, and to the personalities involved, for example, Eileen Colwell, Brian Alderson, Janet Hill and Aidan Chambers. As he says, these debates induce a feeling of déjà vu. The same arguments recur today: should the medal go to a book of literary quality which few children are likely to read; or to one which combines some quality with popular appeal? Many Carnegie winners, such as *The Hobbit* and *The Iron Man*, are

social and political values on the working-class young. Springhall is fuller on the efforts at institutional invigilation of the nation's adolescent raw material. "It helped to fetch you along", an East End carpenter's son remarked of the Eton Manor Boys' Club at his youth.

The remarkably cohesive, though deeply divided, nation which such institutions contributed to hold together was to fetch many of his contemporaries along to the Somme. Yet partisans of national and imperial greatness realized that the task of galvanizing the energies of the people spanned class boundaries. "The listless self-indulgence, the pert self-assurance, the selfishness and want of reverence, which are so characteristic of the life in a low district", as Octavia Hill's words, could be found in higher districts too, and if corner boys had to be broken in to assume their responsibilities in national destiny, Whig lordlings, for example, as Gladstone knew, had to be also, in order to maintain the world their fathers recognized and were still trying to persuade themselves that they could command. It was a generation rather than a class that was decimated in the service of nationalism in two world wars while its elders stayed at home.

title, "The limits of fiction".

This book is very much the product of a problem-solving society, imbued with its optimism and naivety. Most European writers, apart from the professional agony aunts, would probably feel like scurrying back to their ivory towers at even a trickle of such letters. While admiring the openness and human decency that sits down and replies in person to each *cri de coeur*, I feel a certain unease that a writer should be under such pressure, that huge social obligations should be raising their shark-like fins under the frail craft of fictional integrity. It is an expression of the utmost democracy; and yet, strangely enough, it suggests the kinds of demands made on writers in societies that are anything but democratic, where, though books are read, the literary imagination is all but dead.

as Cynthia Harnett's *The Wool-Pack* (1951), *A Grass Rope* by William Mayne (1957), *The Moon in the Cloud* by Rosemary Harris (1968), were criticized as being elitist, even at the time they were chosen, and are not read today.

As a whole the list appears serious and worthy, but more recently the award has gone to obviously popular choices: Robert Westall's *The Machine Gunners* (1975, still the subject of complaints) and Gene Kemp's *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler* (1977). Some winners have become modern classics, such as C. S. Lewis's *The Last Battle* (1956) and Philippa Pearce's *Ton's Midnight Garden* (1958), but, as Barker points out, the selection committees missed *The Hobbit* and didn't commend Ted Hughes's *The Iron Man*. In shortening his lengthy research for this most readable book, Barker has sometimes left out what the general reader would find helpful, such as one-line descriptions of the books' themes. The perennial battle to publicize the Medal (and its fellow, the Kate Greenaway, for children's book illustration) is also described. According to Barker, it has been traditionally awarded in secrecy, and even recently it did not get the news coverage achieved by the first "Smarties" prize.

Barker looks forward to the continuance of the Medal, but does not suggest a solution to the current argument (again, there is a sense of déjà vu). While teenage and young-adult fiction is still published on children's lists, and is thus eligible for the Medal, a "high quality novel for teenagers" is likely to displace equally excellent work for the under-twelves. This year, however, the award of the Medal to *Storm*, by Kevin Crossley-Holland, rectified this imbalance, and honoured a dedicated writer. It also avoided the invidious task of choosing between two challenging, politically oriented novels for teenagers: *The Nature of the Beast* by Janine Howler and *Children of the Dust* by Debbie Lawrence.

On the right lines

A. L. Le Quesne

PETER HUNT
Backtrack
136pp, Julius MacRae, £7.25.
0862032725

I must confess that I did not start reading *Backtrack* with any predisposition in Peter Hunt's favour when I discovered from the dust-jacket that his two previous books were about a group of teenagers bedevilled by timeshifts near Hay-on-Wye and another group of children, also on the Welsh border, who meet up with the descendants of King Arthur's Round Table. This area, both territorial and children's-literary, has been so heavily scored over in recent years that I sometimes marvel that any children remain untimeshifted west of the Gailey roundabout on the A5. The style of the book is also fairly off-putting - jagged with trendiness to the extent that much of it seems to be written in present participles, and different narrative voices which shift and blur to a degree that often leaves the reader doubtful as to who it is who is actually doing the writing.

But Mr Hunt won me over before he had finished. I think his style still needs to simmer down a good deal; and certainly his book is derivative in the sense that Alan Garner, and maybe one or two others, are moving murky

in the background somewhere. But there is no shame in following in Alan Garner's footsteps, and for the rest, although this book is indeed about a pair of adolescents investigating an event in the past on the Welsh border, they do it fairly, without timeshifts, and with a lot of ingenuity. Mr Hunt writes with lively imagination, and his plot moves at a good pace; and although the contrast of his central characters (slightly neglected rich girl from posh boarding school and local state school boy) is not original, it is sharply and unapologetically observed. Neither the relationship nor the past event they are trying to unravel - a mysterious train crash during the First World War - is brought to any too-easy resolution. At the end boy and girl seem to be drifting apart, and the mystery of the train crash is never solved, though we are offered several alternative solutions. Family relationships come into it too, and from time to time the author touches on the theme of an adolescent uneasily groping for his own identity with real sensitivity.

It will be a further point in Peter Hunt's favour for some that he is clearly a dedicated railway enthusiast. He has gone to the lengths of inventing a whole railway of his own for the accident, purely for the joy of it, and has lovingly documented it with a series of pastiches of stock forms of railway literature, all highly recognizable, and all most credibly and elegantly done.

Hanoverian hopes

Edward Blishen

JANA IKEN
Who and Pa
21pp, Cape, £7.95.
0240236410

As the author says, a new reader needs no hint of the story so far: though an old one will be aware that this is the seventh book in the series named after King James III but starring Dido Twice, and follows an adventure in which, at the coronation of Richard IV, the Hanoverians attempted to slide St Paul's Cathedral sideways into the Thames. It is a few years into the Victorian. The Margrave of Nordmark has not abandoned hope of dislodging the Tudor-Suaria, and is leaning heavily for that purpose on Dido's father, Abednego Twice, a villainous composer of genius. Wolves are converging on London, at one moment invading Harrods, and are barely kept at bay by the young Duke of Battersea (descended from Sam Bayswater, who supplied mince pies to Charles II). The best characters avoid a variety of hideous ends by inches, and some of the worst do not.

Nobody does this sort of thing so well as Joan Aiken. Her skill lies in a buoyancy of invention that keeps the reader in a state of constant happiness. Partly this is a matter of language: much of it drawn, one guesses, from scattered actual dialects. People feel nohowish, and don't so much die as hop the twig. Then there is a general sensation, as to London itself, of

blunt modernity alongside a kind of architecture in which Dickens's city is grafted on to Shakespeare's. Heroes and heroines, who abound, are of the diffident kind: so though we imagine Dido might in the eighth or ninth book become Duchess of Battersea, or even Queen of England, this instalment ends with her digging her elbows into the nearest ribs at the very thought of it. Here and there, a name says all: what more needs to be known about Mr Twice's appalling lady friend than that she is called Lily Bloodvessel?

There are two special triumphs. One is the character of Mr Twice, a villain who raises fleeing ethical issues: subsumed in Dido's thought that perhaps the Junes era what is important, not Pa. An act of major callousness, and even of murder, causes in him only a burst of song: "Oh what a fearful finish / To sink beneath the ice / But let your tears diminish / Ha's now in Paradise." Many young readers will boo Mr Twice, while reserving the right, a page or two from the end, to mourn for him.

The second triumph lies in the way the story is undraped with children: in the street, passing messages vital to the health of the State; everywhere, playing games that reflect on the plot. In the end, what this warm book in this warm series offers, apart from the pleasure of making a mass of history, is the joy of a sort of baroque gossip. A message on which the entire climax depends comes by way of someone's dad - "and his dad told my dad, and my dad told my mum, and my mum told Mrs Watkins, and Mrs Watkins told Peggy Watkins and Peggy Watkins told me".

Practical appliances

Christopher Hawtree

THOMAS M. DISCH
The Brave Little Toaster
Illustrated by Karen Lee Schmidt
76pp, Grafton, £5.95.
0246130804

Cruel objections to the burnt edges of Thomas M. Disch's book for children should not obscure a tale that is no less wholesome for offering a mere slice of life. Originally published six years ago in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, it is now made all the more palatable by the addition of Karen Lee Schmidt's crisp black-and-white drawings, which effectively recall those found in old mail-order catalogues.

Abandoned by their owner in a country cottage, a group of household appliances, including a Hoover and a Tenofo lamp, decide to go

in search of his city apartment. This is not as improbable as it might sound: "It is a rule, which all appliances must obey, that whenever human beings are observing them they must remain perfectly still." Consciously or not, Disch's narrator is echoing an age-old philosophical conundrum. Fear of being seen is sufficient to confine the travellers to a forest. Piled on the office-chair, which now sports castors from an old bed, they are drawn along by the Hoover which is continually wary of wasting the power derived from an *ad hoc* battery. (One would say "who", but the wireless insists "we're all us".) For all the apparent sanctuary, the forest contains danger, not to mention a family of squirrels who regale the company with jokes in questionable taste. To give away too much would be unfair. Sufficient to say that, thanks to the toaster's efforts, the story manages to reverse the laws of physics: what seems black tragedy at the city dump becomes light, and even glorious, as they look forward to a dignified, working retirement.

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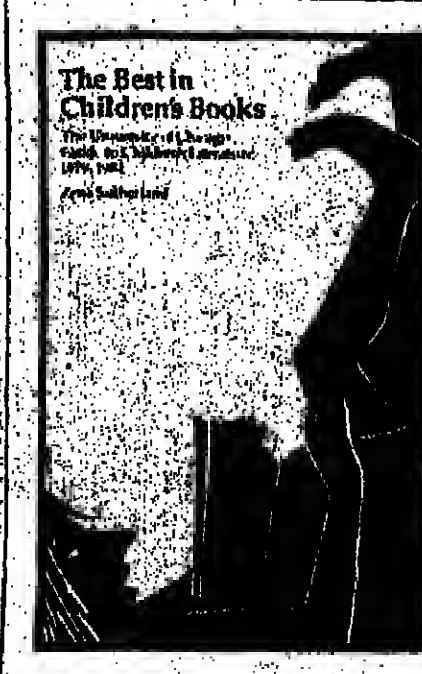
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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

Prairie prospects

Anne Duchêne

PATRICIA MACLEACHIAN
Sarah, Plain and Tall
58pp, Julia MacRae, £4.95,
086203 2474

This short book has been given the 1986 Newbery Medal by the American Library Association; which is something to flutter the dove-cotes of juvenile publishing. How best should it be commended in those outside? "Homey" carries undesirable American connotations: but can one, even in the days of wholemeal, wholefood, holistic insistences, recommend anything as "wholesome"? The word's associations – "hale", "healing", even "lily" – seem the most appropriate.

Sarah, Plain and Tall is about a small family living on a small farm, somewhere on the prairie, some time around the turn of the century. The narrator is Anna, a young girl, old enough to make a stab at looking after her father and her young brother Caleb. (Her mother died when Caleb was born.) Now Papa has advertised "in the newspapers" for a new wife, and been answered from distant Maine by Sarah – "plain and tall", in her own description. She is coming for a month, he explains: "to see how it is. Just to see."

Sarah brings her cat, and a collection of shells and stones from the coast of Maine. She is very homesick for the sea. She sees, though, that the prairie has some of its movement; and the family builds a hay-dune for her to slide down. She is, as her initial letter stated, with superb simplicity, "not mild-mannered". She

borrowed some of Papa's overalls to help him mend the roof, her mouth full of nails. She learns to ride, to plough, and to drive a wagon. She also takes apples to the horses in the barn, loves flowers and teaches the family to sing "Summer is a time in", which one trusts will not raise patronizing European eyebrows.

Anna cannot do more than imply the grown-up loneliness of Papa, and of Sarah (Sarah's fisherman brother, in whom she kept house, is marrying a young woman); she can describe her own and Caleb's unmothered forlornness and anxious hope that Sarah may decide to stay. (Caleb, in fact, is rather dangerously winsome, when forlorn and querulous, and is only yanked back by his sister's more trenchant common sense.) Her story, while it conveys the space and exhilaration of the prairie, is firmly underpinned by the detail of family routine – feeding the sheep, cleaning their pens, cutting wood – and of small family jokes. School is somewhere they go to in winter, it seems; and this story is about a single summer month.

The story is said to be based on an episode in the author's family history, and certainly it has the well-tempered burnish of legend about it, and a wonderfully careless, commanding verisimilitude. It is a little tale about the forming of a new relationship, and one which has in carry all the impulses of successful family life. It could very safely be read aloud, or given to any readers not yet corrupted enough to find it all American apple-pie-in-the-sky. Indeed, the only question might be whether one should offer children nowadays a picture of so innocent, robust and felicitous an Arcadia. To which the answer is yes, about a thousand times or so.

Spare the rod

Gerald Mangan

JOHN ROWE TOWNSEND
The Persuading Stick
92pp, Viking Kestrel, £5.95,
067081 170.

Sara Casson is the sort of average schoolgirl who never gets promoted from the back row of angels in the annual Nativity play. She's mousey-haired, with nondescript eyes and no particular talents; and she's all too used to being left behind by her two older brothers, and her more dynamic schoolmates. "Wait for me" has become her catch-phrase; but no one ever waits, until the day she finds the "persuading stick" in a clump of grass by the canal. Summoning her mysteriously from his hiding-place, the small silvery rod suddenly confers on her the power to make people do what she wants them to do.

All sorts of dreams are soon coming true. But there are few tales of wish-fulfilment without snags; and it is the ethics of the matter that make *The Persuading Stick* a very absorbing little parable. Mum is persuaded to make beans on toast for Sara's pals, the waspish neighbour meekly surrenders a stray ball, and the teacher lets the class out early. Free sweets

are to be had for the asking, and Sara is suddenly the centre of attention; but the sweets turn sour when she reflects on how power can be abused. As she grows addicted to it, and then afraid of it, elation gives way to guilt and worry, and she is soon anxious to get rid of it and return to normal.

Keeping within the bounds of possibility, and leaving the magic open to question, John Rowe Townsend makes clever use of the device to point a distinction between imaginary power and real inner strength. The problem brings out Sara's natural sense of responsibility, but it is a family crisis that displays her real mettle. When her unemployed adolescent brother is killed, and despair drives him to the edge, her own affection and common sense come to the rescue, without any artificial support. There are sentimental moments in this brother-sister relationship, faintly reminiscent of *The Colchier in the Rye*, but it remains convincing; a cheerful morality, which children of all ages should find thought-provoking as well as entertaining.

The winner of the 1986 Grand Prix Smarties Prize is *The Snow Spider* by Jenny Nimmo (Methuen). This year's Emil/Kurt Mascher Award was won by *The Jolly Postman* by Allan and Janet Ahlberg (Heinemann).

Happily ever after

Alice H. G. Phillips

BETSY BYARS
The Blossoms Meet the Vulture Lady
126pp, Bodley Head, £4.95,
0370 307607

Betsy Byars, who has looked straight in the eye of the scariest things a child can imagine – a parent's death or betrayal – here introduces readers of around ten or eleven to an outsider, one of those frightening beings who wander on the edges of society, sleep rough and talk only to themselves. Mad Mary lives in a cave in the woods and competes with the vultures for her meat; with her blood-stained game bag and long wooden crook, she is a eerie apparition as she picks up dead animals along the highway for her stewpot. When the youngest Blossom child disappears in her company, his family are out of their minds with worry, and the police are called in to organize a search.

As anyone who has read Byars's *The Not-Just-Anybody Family* already knows, the Blossoms are not exactly an upright American clan, ruled by convention. Pap, the grandfather, collects discarded cans for a living and was gaoled at the age of seventy-two for shooting out a traffic light with his shotgun; Vicki, the mother, gave up riding in rodeos to become a hairdresser; and the three children they have raised in a tumble-down house somewhere in the Southern countryside have unusual reserves of ingenuity and feeling. But even these open-minded youngsters think Mad Mary might be a witch, and they instinctively fear her, as does their mother – and the family dog, too, for that matter. Only Pap, who went to school with Mary, believes that she is gentle, if unsociable.

Mad Mary has lived in the wild for fifteen years and shucked off human traits like smiling and taking off one's boots at night and caring about other people. Then she comes across Junior Blossom, a dreamy, emotional eight-year-old. Junior has managed to trap himself, deep in Mad Mary's woods, in a beautiful strong trap he built to capture a coyote escaped from the local zoo; worn out with trying to escape from his own prison, he has cried himself to sleep. Mary discovers him and, with her lifetime's experience of man's inhumanity to

man, immediately assumes that cruel people have locked him up in a cage. It is a predicament that touches her, for, as she later says to Junior, "Being put in a cage would be the worst thing that could happen to me." She opens the trap and carries the sleeping boy back to her home hidden among the rocks, thinking to protect him. The marks of her crook and her man's boots remain to alert the Blossoms and the community.

Junior is terrified when he wakes in a cave and realizes he is alone with Mad Mary. But once he can bear to talk to her, Mary proves herself a not at all fearsome woman, who is widely read and talks good sense and simply left a society she didn't think much of to create her own, consistent way of life out in nature. (Readers already know, from Pap, that Mary's father, her last surviving relative, died in a fire that burned down their ancestral house, just before she took to the forest; so there is an understandable emotional reason, as well, for her break with the world.)

Byars, having arranged this meeting fraught with strangeness and possibilities, makes Mary comprehensible and responsive too quickly, and allows Junior to slip without a struggle into a happy, mindless crush on her, there in the cosy cave with all the pretty vultures floating overhead. The dialogue gets a bit saccharine; children may begin to wish that Mad Mary would rip open a rabbit with her bare hands and that Junior would ask her some embarrassing questions. The manhunt also loses its drive around this time (although charmingly side-tracked by a love scene between Junior's sister and her young admirer, who has an artificial leg).

Similar sentimentality crops up towards the end of other Byars books, including the otherwise tough-minded and savvy *The Pinballs* and even the inspired *The Night Swimmers*, but it hurts more here. It touches with its deadly soggy the vivid details, the soapy colloquial dialogue, the slightly outlandish flourishes and the rambunctious Americanness. But children, after all, love a happy ending, and the sentimental last chapters cannot sink this story, or defeat these characters. Nor do they totally subvert the serious issues of safety and conformity that Byars has raised for children just beginning to face the world outside.

Breaking the rules

Sarah Hayes

PAULA FOX
The Moonlight Man
179pp, Dent, £7.95,
0460 062433

Catherine's father is late picking her up from boarding school – three weeks late. And instead of spending the summer in Rockport, as she had expected, he takes her to an odd little house in Nova Scotia at the back end of nowhere. Catherine knew her father would turn up eventually. She knew he would charm and entertain her in unexpected ways. She knew she would be dismayed. She did not know that her father was an alcoholic.

The word alcoholic is never used, Mr Ames is a drunk, a lush, a moonshine man; not a "problem". This is not a novel about learning to live with alcoholism, but a portrait of a wonderful, charming, doomed man who happens to drink. He drinks in a wild, blind, obessional way; Catherine is only fifteen, but she is forced to turn out in the middle of the night and drive her father and his drinking comrades home. On one occasion, after a tour (for research purposes) round various local illicit stills, Catherine thinks he is dying. In his sober periods he goes on fawning and grovelling and charming and "drowning his daughter with language".

By the end of the summer Catherine can take no more. She is glad to return to her ordinary, tidy mother and her careful, caring stepfather. But she has changed. She sees the world differently: not as a place in which people are hopelessly flawed, and not even as a place in which weakness requires understanding and forgiveness. Paula Fox is not concerned with morality. By the end of the sum-

mer Catherine has seen through her father's sickness to the person underneath, and he has opened her eyes and ears. Mr Ames bombards his daughter with books and words and ideas. He bullies her: "Don't be victim. It rots the brain." "Find a better word." "Be dignified." "Don't be a prig." "Don't condescend." Gradually Catherine learns to be true to herself, to trust her reactions and throw off the shackles of convention and fashion. She even learns to respect the humble sandwich.

The novel is painful; there is the suffering and self-hatred of the drunk, and the pain of living with him – with the broken promises, the lying and the charades of renunciation. But it is not an unhappy or depressing novel. Good times as well as bad lodge in Catherine's memory. Mr Ames is an exciting man to do very ordinary things with. And the landscape of Nova Scotia ateals up imperceptibly to emphasise the hurt.

The Moonlight Man breaks all the rules for teenage novels. It has a cast of two, both of whom are bookish; there is no romance, no sex, no action; and the author dares to preach (though her sermon has a strange theme). Paula Fox challenges the reader to take another look at her or his assumptions, using the tragedy of the adult to break through the complacency of youth. Despite its sombre story and serious intent, her book remains quirky, humorous, intimate and readable – a triumph against the odds.

Faber and Faber, the *Guardian* and BBC Television's *Jackanory* have announced a new prize for an unpublished children's story for seven to eleven-year-olds. The winning story will be published and produced on *Jackanory*. The closing date for submissions is May 30, 1987. Further information is available from Faber and Faber, Children's Book Competition, 3 Queen's Square, London WC1N 3AH.

The pictured world

Jane Doonan

In *Piggbook*, Anthony Browne attacks male chauvinism, and makes a case for the equal distribution of chores and the flexibility of male and female roles. His contemporary theme is perched boldly on the timeless framework of transgression, suffering, repentance, forgiveness and re-birth; his vehicle is the Piggott family, father, mother and two sons. While Mr Piggott goes about his important business and the boys attend their important school, Mrs Piggott drudges for all, as well as going out to work. Eventually the swinish behaviour of Mr Piggott and the boys pushes out both their own humankindness and the overburdened Mrs Piggott. Porcine metamorphosis takes place on a cosmic scale. The Pig-in-the-Moon looks down disapprovingly, above tree tops curving in a hog's back. Inside the house, tile and wallpaper patterns, fender and fire-irons, tapes and telephone sport snouts. The male Piggotts snuffle and root in their metaphorical pigsty. Mum's eventual return signals a new order: father and sons discover the positive pleasures of homecare while she enjoys herself mending the car – pigs might fly. Both funny and disturbing, Browne achieves a fine balance between the humour of the fantastic imagery and the seriousness of his message.

Most counting books overtly declare their laudable aim in the text and pictures, whereas Satoshi Kitamura's *When Sheep Cannot Sleep* is a perfect picture book free from stereotype images, brimming with unforced humour, which appears just to happen to have some beginning things worth counting, as the pages turn. Woolly the sheep, an expressive animal with some of the appeal of a Snoopy, goes on his insomniac rambles under dramatic night skies. He chases a butterfly, envies a pair of sleeping ladybirds, is amused by a trio of bats. Grashoppers sing to him, flying saucers zip overhead. Taking refuge from a storm in an empty house Woolly finally falls asleep toiling up his extensive family, while the reader is left to tally the scores. Kitamura's style counts for still more. Economical compositions in masterly pen and watercolour show every element meticulously spaced and placed. Use of colour is sophisticated with subtle combinations like saffron, ochre and intense inky-violet. Shapes are pure and sculptural, bestowing reassuring solidity on the pictured world.

Anthony Browne: *Piggbook*. Julia MacRae, £5.95, 0 86203 268 7.
Satoshi Kitamura: *When Sheep Cannot Sleep*. A. and C. Black, £5.95, 0 7136 2798 0.
Neil Phillips: *Drake's Visit to the King*. Illustrated by Henry Underhill. Collins, £4.95, 0 00 183158 5.
Sally Milne: *Crisis at Crabtree*. Illustrated by Errol Le Cain. Lutterworth, £6.95, 0 7188 2651 5.
Jaquette Thomas: *Janine and the New Baby*. Illustrated by Jennifer Northway. Deutsch, £2.25, 0 233 97916 6.

Forms of address

Kate Flint

JANET AND ALLAN AHLBERG
The Jolly Postman or Other People's Letters
Heinemann, £5.95,
0 431 92515 2

The contents of the letters which Postman Pn makes such efforts to deliver generally remain frustratingly unrevealed. Janet and Allan Ahlberg's splendidly inventive book, however, satisfies curiosity by allowing not just to read, but to open other people's mail.

The Postman's round is described in cheerful, but unremarkable rhymes, as he travels from one fairy-tale character to another, wobbling slightly from champagne as he cycles away from the celebrations at Cinderella's palace. The delight of the book lies in the envelopes which are interwoven with the pages of prose: the exterior release preliminary hints about the senders. Careful child's hand-writing and a crookedly stuck-on stamp lead, when extracted and unfolded, to a prettily illustrated (if badly spelt) letter of apology to the Three Bears' household from Goldilocks: she offers friends with an invitation to Baby Bear to come to her party, promising "3 kinds of jelly and a conjobora". Any suspicion that all the correspondence will be from children of the reader's own age is quickly dispelled, however, by the circular which the Wicked Witch re-sends to her second class, from Hobgoblin Supplies Ltd, offering a range of bargain bargains aimed at the modern witch, a new/new (buy four, and get one free), a non-stick Cauldron Set (with the bonus of a recipe for food in the hole), and a magic broom for the cat. Unsurprisingly, the

In 1891, an Oxford grocer, Henry Underhill, painted glass magic-lantern slides to illustrate the old fairy tale of "Drake's Visit to the King", for the children in his Sunday School. Now, the story is retold by Neil Philip and Underhill's watercolours are reproduced to give pleasure to another generation. The text is replete with lively comparisons, repetitions, and onomatopoeia, its tone as absurdly dignified as its hero. The illustrations, in rounds and rectangles, oppose the text in a formal pattern, and both are set against a rich turquoise page. The humour of the pictures lies in the prosaic way in which the extraordinary events are visualized. The vivacity of the brush on the picture-surface characterizes these fresh little compositions which glow again in a new form.

The village of Crabtree is threatened by a proposed motorway cutting right across its green. The surrounding Norman, Elizabethan, Georgian and Victorian buildings quake in their personified foundations, and discuss what's to be done. Errol Le Cain, faced with illustrating Sally Miles's *Crisis at Crabtree* and the surreality of living, talking houses, sites his detailed coloured drawings in oval frames, distorting the perspective to suggest reflections in curved glass. This device allows the houses a vital sense of movement as they bend and stretch their façades in agonized conversation. Each house, by justifying its existence, gives the young reader a pointed history lesson. Fortunately, protection orders on the most venerable buildings save them all.

Janine and the New Baby is a direct account of a little black girl whose loving aunt looks after her while her mother goes to have a baby. The illustrations and the text combine to make this a comforting book. Jennifer Northway's sepia line lightly cradles forms, and scribbles of grainy crayon enrich washes of clean, cheerful colour. Friendly neighbours, black and white, in saris, synthetics and jungle prints, busy themselves in an idealized urban landscape of red brick, apricot, lavender and peach stucco.

Anthony Browne: *Piggbook*. Julia MacRae, £5.95, 0 86203 268 7.
Satoshi Kitamura: *When Sheep Cannot Sleep*. A. and C. Black, £5.95, 0 7136 2798 0.
Neil Phillips: *Drake's Visit to the King*. Illustrated by Henry Underhill. Collins, £4.95, 0 00 183158 5.
Sally Milne: *Crisis at Crabtree*. Illustrated by Errol Le Cain. Lutterworth, £6.95, 0 7188 2651 5.
Jaquette Thomas: *Janine and the New Baby*. Illustrated by Jennifer Northway. Deutsch, £2.25, 0 233 97916 6.

Postman is shown hiding behind the paper, as the Witch cackles through her mail, leaving his green tea on one side.

The Ahlbergs encourage the importance of looking carefully, and of making visual connections with already held fairy-tale and nursery-rhyme knowledge; not just by rustling through the contents of the Postman's sack, but by showing the countryside he works in, the interiors he visits. A cow jumps over the moon in the early evening sky as he cycles back from Goldilocks's party, having played – what else? – Postman's Knock. Among the guests there are Mr Jack, with sticking plaster on his broken crown; a rotund egg in braces, and, eating crisps, a small black sheep. Little Miss Muffet and Old King Cole find their way on to the pound note which Mrs Bunting and Baby are kind enough to enclose in their birthday card to Goldilocks; while on the holiday postcard that Jack sends Mr V. Bigg in Bcanstall Gardens, the old woman's shoe has been refurbished as a luxury hotel, with entertainment from the cat and the fiddle.

Additionally, full use is made of contemporary culture. Peter Piper has pleasure in sending a copy of his book for younger readers to Cinderella on the occasion of her marriage to H.R.H. Prince Charming, reminding one, on the final page of his tiny souvenir, that the headlines had proclaimed "PAIRY-TALE PRINCESS". A less pleasant communication is sent to Mr Wolf, from Meeko, Minny, Mo & Co., Solicitors, requesting that he cease his harassment and impersonation of their client's grandmother. The Ahlbergs' book succeeds in making the familiar new, even surprising. In its inventiveness and immaculate execution, it is a delight to read.

The extra dimension

Roy Foster

In the post-Struwwelpeter age, how do children's books make a moral point? The best mechanism is that adopted by Graham Oakley's *Henry's Quest*, in which the brilliant illustrations sustain an unsettling extra dimension, set against a determinedly cheery text. Henry sets off on a quest from his kingdom, in search of the magic grail which will win the princess's hand. But though his kingdom is beautifully drawn as a medieval paradise of open-field farming, women in kerchiefs hoe the crops in front of woods which contain rotting technological junk; rabbit-hutches are made from a abandoned television-sets; and Henry minds his sheep among obsolete ivy-encrusted pylons. And the grail is an unknown but dimly remembered substance called Petrol, which – tradition has it – will conjure into life the king's museum of immobile motor-cars.

The world of *Ridley Walker* slowly takes over as Henry travels through grass-grown suburbs invaded by flocks and herds, and past grounded airliners converted into tribal homes – none of this actually mentioned in the text. Even a nightmare pursuit by feral animals in an abandoned safari park passes with little comment. When Henry discovers what is left of "civilization", it is a sulphurous Orwellian city of pleasure-doped proles controlled by "crowd pacification units", ruled by an emperor whose reading is *Mein Kampf* and the life of Boss Tweed. The visual statements become more and more didactic, but the chirpy commentary never falters. Henry escapes home to his sylvan haymakers; but though the petrol mercifully fails to perform its Promethean function, an implicit threat now hangs over paradise. It is a remarkable tour de force, and could well become a contemporary classic in the Raymond Briggs mode.

David McKee is also well known for visual shock-tactics; books like *Not Now, Bernard* punched home the sort of message which delighted children and disturbed their parents. *The Magician and the Balloon*, however, chooses sentimentless prettiness instead of brutal surrealism: a king's desire to map and re-plan his kingdom is foiled by his conservationist magician. Royalty, magic, and fabled lands continue to predominate; Stephen Boswell's *King Gordobus's Fabulous Zoo* also chooses medievalism and monarchy to make its point about the injustice of acquiring captive beasts as status symbols (even when, as here, they are all mythic or supposedly extinct). The romance of the beasts is conveyed by highly patterned heraldic art-work, but the ensemble is rather disappointingly two-dimensional.

A more cosmic message is preached by William Steig's *Rotten Island*, which creates a world of ghastly creatures drawn jaggedly in Steig's high New Yorker style, and enlivened by psychedelic, acid colours. The story of a monstrous environment destroying itself and being redeemed by flowers and rain is so simple that one looks suspiciously for purely adult meanings. ("The monsters) were vain and jealous. They could spend hours adoring their

own ugliness, and resented any who seemed uglier. Some lived inside the volcanoes. They liked to bathe in the lava, then cool off stretched on a hot ember in the hydling sun, dreaming up new ways to hurt or planning to get even for something that never happened." Given that the volcanoes look like skyscrapers, can this be an allegory of Truman Capote's Manhattan?

Set against these is a crop of mundane morality-tales of everyday life. Pamela Allen's decidedly bald *Herbert and Harry* is a Chin and Abel story; Herbert sweats out his life burdened by a treasure-chest he can never securely hide, and Harry survives the childhood murder attempt to end his days happily surrounded by grandchildren. That appears to be all; neither character nor plot is exploited beyond the bare bones of a moral fable (though there are some nice visual tricks like Herbert becoming bald, headed and aged while still trapped in the T-shirt and shorts which he was wearing when he tried to drown his brother). Even more limited is John Prenter's *The Perfect Day*, an expose of a day by the sea ruined by a wringing brut; subversive hubbles issue from his mouth, sending up the brightly sententious narrative. The format has possibilities, but it is shot-neg by banal and dated illustrations; nor does it lend itself easily to being read out loud.

Marcella was Bored by Robert Byrd delivers another behaviourist message; critical and binned, Marcella the cat admonishes her happily burgeoised family for the wide world, finds it lacking, and returns to see quotidian life through new eyes. Delicate and intricate drawings are not compensation enough for a story – and a moral – which is just as limited as it sounds in this abstract. The question is how to convey significance. Most of these books simply deliver a crude (and questionable) moral of "always-keep-a-hold-of-nurse" and "far-off-hills-are-greener"; which is, after all, a part of *Henry's Quest* too, but only a part. Illustrations can do more than illustrate; they should illuminate and develop the message, providing if necessary a commentary on it. At its rare best, achieved by the likes of Graham Oakley, the children's picture book is one of the few forms of communication where the MacLuan theory still holds good.

Graham Oakley: *Henry's Quest*. Macmillan, £5.95, 0 333 4084 1.
David McKee: *The Magician and the Balloon*. £6.95, Blackie, 0 216 92074 4.
Stephen Boswell: *King Gordobus's Fabulous Zoo*. Methuen, £4.50, 0 416 59650 9.
William Steig: *Rotten Island*. Viking Kestrel, £5.95, 0 670 80552 1.
Pamela Allen: *Herbert and Harry*. Hamish Hamilton, £5.95, 0 241 11768 2.
John Prenter: *The Perfect Day*. Bodley Head, £5.50, 0 370 30742 9.
Robert Byrd: *Marcella was Bored*. Andersen, £5.95, 0 86264 125 X.

Over 33,000 entries were submitted to W. H. Smith in 1985 for their annual Young Writers' Competition. There were sixty-three winners and runners-up and their work appears in *Young Words* (127pp, Macmillan, £2.95, 0333 42125 6).

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Gollancz

Slapstick and symmetry

Andrew Wawn

ALAN GARNER (Editor)
A Bag of Moonshine
Illustrated by Patrick James Lynch
144pp. Collins. £8.95.
000184013

The success of this new collection of some two dozen tales, re-created from the folklore of England and Wales (and the Isle of Man), will surprise few of Alan Garner's followers. The range of the collection is striking – prose and verse; long and short; riddles and puzzles as well as tests and guests; gold and greed as well as love and loss; the familiar trencheries of mermaids and witches alongside the more singular threat of the ysgwyr Fawr, a kind of remotivated Rumpelstiltskin.

The world view of these tales never surrenders to bland simplicities or comfortable pieties. There seem few prizes for the gormless overreacher, he be the witless Jack Whopstraw, or the wicked sparrow, or the hunched Billy Bowker, the hobbit with delusions of hoggarthood; and yet it is hard not to warm to the unpuncturable cheerfulness of the hunching Mr Vinegar, sort of Boethius of the heiligen, whose refrain "But never mind" is squirted like a pain-killing spray over successive disastrous acts of entrepreneurial folly. Signs of a more positive heroism are discernible in several quick-footed, clear-sighted young protagonists, yet not all is *rides de passage* optimism and whimsy. "Hom Brides" is an uneasy tale of devilish possession as well as of childish innocence; the "Salmon Cariatid" offers an intriguing and, in its way, powerfully symbolic tale about a predatory and sensual mermaid and her young male victim; while "Delancy of the Lakes" reveals folk poignantly ensnared in ill-fuck's meshes with no happy ending in sight. The narrator stares the truth in the eye: "It was hard for Hewin. But that's how it was in old days." Elsewhere, however, good cheer is soon restored, whether through a surreal verse fantasy, in which distant echoes of "The Twelve Days of Christ-

mas" can be heard, or through the ingenious slapstick and triadic symmetries of the tale of Harry Cup and his magic table, purse and stick. The Russian poet Mayakovsky urged an aspiring young writer to "fill your storehouse constantly, fill the granaries of your skull with all kinds of words, necessary, expressive, rare, invented, renovated and manufactured". This collection of tales reveals on every page that Alan Garner's granaries are characteristically



well stocked with rich and rare words and expressions – blinging, skening, granced, keeked out, skrawked, nowt, gnwk, blob-tongue, mazy crow, thrutching piece, loh's chance, big hart of fern, as short as old sticks, wriggled like a snail in a bottle, quiet as a niter, hinked like a duck in thunder, you great gap-sheet, by the cringe, cob this for a game – all of them subtly and affectionately deployed, easily understood from context, and likely to intrigue and delight young readers. These pungent expressions are embedded in prose marked by a brisk yet evasive colloquialism, brightly flecked with alliteration, internal rhyme, "wrongly" formed past tenses and determinedly archaic tag phrases, and with a telling fondness for patterned repetition and for studied avoidance of terrors of subordinate clauses. The cumulative effect is invigorating, disarming and eerie. Rarely can the voice of "once upon a time, in such and such a place, not near nor far, not high nor low", have been more engagingly caught.

Beware mermaids

Charles Causley

ERIC QUAYLE
The Magic Ointment and other Cornish Legends
Illustrated by Michael Foreman
108pp. Andersen. £7.95.
0862641292

"Under the elevating influence of sobriety and true religion", declared the Reverend C.G. Honor in 1869, "the Cornish are rapidly rising above their former degrading credulousness." Fortunately for the survival of much local legend and folk-tale, it was in the same decade that Robert Hunt published his *Popular Romances of the West of England*. Hunt's indebtedness, in turn, to the Cornishman William Bottrell was considerable, though Bottrell's *Traditions and Heartside Stories of West Cornwall*, originally recounted by him in newspapers and journals, did not appear until 1870, two subsequent volumes being published in 1873 and 1880.

It is from these pioneer collections that Eric Quayle has chosen a dozen tales for retelling in his *The Magic Ointment*. Some, such as "The Mermaid of Zennor" or the adventures of Jack the Giant-Killer, are well known. Others, like the delightful "Duffy and the Devil" and "The Shawl Ghost", are by no means as familiar, but they more than earn their keep in this interesting selection.

The originals, as set down by Hunt or Bottrell, as often as not have the rough and angling simplicity of an oral telling. We hear, unquestionably, the voice of the early narrator, as in the Hunt version of "Cherry of Zennor".

Old Honey lived with his wife and family in a little hut of two rooms and a "tallat", on the cliff side of Treen in Zennor.

A note explains the exotic word "tallat" (to my mother in North Cornwall, it was "tallat") as a half-floor on which a bed might be placed under the roof.

Mr Quayle renders the opening of the same story as:

Old Winbroome lived with his wife and family in a little granite-bull cottage of only two rooms and a loft on the cliff side of the valley leading down to Zennor Head. On the surface, such differences may seem slight. But to me, this kind of literary smoothness spread over the text like butter gives it an anodyne quality. Too often, the darkness and danger lurking at the heart of these strange tales become several stages removed. The texture of some of the stories, as here retold, sometimes varies in quality. There seems to have been little attempt to refresh the language. Blood runs cold and is frozen in the veins. Characters are bold as brass, pale as death, dry as a bone. The giant Cormoran opens a massive door, carries a massive club, sleeps in a massive bed. I was uneasy, too, at the introduction of a jokey contemporary imagery damaging to the essential timelessness of the folk-tale: the eels who "picked up Land's End on their radar", the others "playing at escalators" as they jumped the buckles of an overshot wheel, the "sparks of static" crackling across the horns of a demon.

Nevertheless, such is the native power of these ancient yarns that once in his stride (in the longer tales, particularly), Quayle's considerable narrative gifts carry the reader triumphantly through to endings in which he is a dab hand with the pay-off. There is also a pleasant detritus of useful information: pickles wear dock leaves as proof against the (literally) deadly sting of a nettle, mermaids are incapable of tears, a sailor never argues with a mermaid and a certain charm against magic is to turn one's shirt.

Michael Foreman's illustrations, streaming with pickles, spriggans, buccas and brownies, have a marvellously deceptive air of effortlessness about them. His West Penwith landscapes, too, sound the appropriate note of unease, one also struck by Hunt's original illustration, the incomparable George Chubb's

English accents

Jan Dalley

SARA AND STEPHEN CORRIN (Editors)
Imagine That! Fifteen fantastic tales
176pp. Faber. £6.95.
0571138438

But why, she cried, must tales of fantasy and delight be written in such a manner?

Hush, my child, replied the wise compiler. Such are the ways of story-tellers.

Do the seven to eleven-year-olds for whom this collection is intended really like the sort of Oldespeake, as bogs as a Cotswold Tea Shoppe sign, that produces phrases like "It so chanced that", "Think well on it", "Oh blessed gift", and so on? Since all but two of these fifteen stories are translated or "retold", there can be little justification for subjecting children to anything other than proper, vigorous, modern English. Fantasy book recent and traditional creates its own vocabulary, as it creates its own world, but surely sorcerers can prove as exciting as Daleks or Bionic Man without hiding behind a wooden linguistic style which has probably never been used by anyone except the retellers of traditional stories.

Yet it would be unfair to suggest that every story in this collection is marred by its style. The book's highlights are three African stories, retold by Humphrey Harman, which display wit, irony, a sense of magic, unusual plots and scarcely a trace of Oldespeake which, however, seems almost to be parodied by James Reeves, in his story set in ancient Persia (or

rather, "long-ago Persia"). There are a few jokes discernible in the other original story by E. Nesbit – "What cheer?" said a pleasant voice behind them. They told him what cheer – but it is otherwise disappointingly whimsical. Eileen O'Faolain, retelling the Irish story "The Black Thief", sometimes gives Oldespeake an Irish accent: "It was she was the grand lady that would take the cloak off her own back."

A whiff of national stereotype hangs over many of these stories from various cultures; apart from the Irish talker there is the "lazy" African contemplative; in Arabia an ingenious outcome is secured by extremely crafty behaviour all round; from Italy comes a matrilarch in the making, a "wise" girl who manages her wayward man superbly – although he's such a sap one can't see why she bothers, unless it is for the seven bambini they have in the happy-ever-after. Oh, and he is a Prince.

The clever but self-denying woman who wins through to contented domesticity in the end also appears in Lithuanian and Czech tales – and in these days of examining the ideological content of children's literature, such stories might be accused of Oldthinkin', as well as Oldespeake. But Sara and Stephen Corrin, veteran editors of thirteen previous collections, tell us in their foreword that these stories are not just old but "immensely ancient", and that we might be the thousandth generation to enjoy them. The world of 25,000 years ago did not include Irish Castles, damask hangings, socks or the city of Kiev, as far as I know; even when dealing with fantasy, there is no need to exaggerate.

Hearing the nightingale

Eva Gillies

HELENE EAST
The Emperor and the Nightingale
0356115380
Taro and his Grandmother
0356115399

The White Elephant
0356115372
The Talking Parrot
0356115364

Illustrated by Kwan Shan Mei
Macdonald. £3.95 each.
R.L. BACON

The House of the People
0859533003
The Fish of our Fathers
0859533018

The Home of the Winds
0859533026

Illustrated by R. H. G. Jahnke
Child's Play. £4.95 each.

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork – Yeats chose to move the Emperor from China to Byzantium and, to suit his own poetic purposes, lured Andersen's man-made gold nightingale on its head. But it is only fair to say that Andersen's own nightingale – not the golden clockwork, but the one described as alive and singing and indeed much given to moralizing conversation – is already an artefact, rather too much so for modern tastes. Now, from Singapore, comes a set of four reading-aloud books. One of them retells the familiar Andersen story; the other three present folk tales unfamiliar to Western tradition, culled respectively from Japan, Burma and "a country now called Pakistan". The tale of the Chinese Emperor and the bird who sang in his gardens is told as simply and straightforwardly as the others; and, rather surprisingly, stands as an entirely fitting companion for them.

All four books are "by Helen East, retold from an original by Chia Hean Chak". It is not clear whether we are dealing with a translation, an adaptation or some form of co-authorship, but in any case the result is admirable. The stories themselves are agreeably varied in tone; the Japanese *Taro and his Grandmother* is wryly serious in both setting and intention; the Burmese *White Elephant* frankly farcical; *The Talking Parrot* takes us into a world of high romance; with a Raja, a beautiful princess, a flying horse, and a satisfyingly wicked villain defeated in the end. The veteran Kwan Shan

Mei has done a beautiful job of adapting his illustrations to the character of each story; courtly elegance for the Raja and his princess, low comedy for the Burmese tale, a spare homespun humour for the Japanese, and for the story of the Emperor's nightingale, glowing colours and designs reminiscent of Chinese pottery.

Another author and illustrator team, this time from New Zealand, transports us to a different world, that of Maori villagers and craftsmen. R. L. Bacon and R. H. G. Jahnke are not retelling either *Kunstinchen* or "genuine" folk-tales; rather, they have set themselves the more difficult task of using a children's book to transmit, in a narrative form modelled on oral tradition, the details of a material and spiritual culture.

In *The House of the People*, Bacon describes and Jahnke illustrates the building, by a Maori community, of a meeting house for their village, "a house where our people may meet when the dull dark nights of winter have come, . . . where our children may hear tales of long ago". In *The Fish of our Fathers*, the same community (or one like it) builds a war canoe; in *The Home of the Winds*, a hill fort or pa. In each case, Jahnke's flat, stylized drawings show us the brown-skinned warriors and women, the grey-headed old councillors, the beach where the villagers confer about their project, the forests where a suitable tree is sought and felled, the work in progress, the designs taken from the surrounding natural world; and at last, the finished meeting-house or canoe or fort. The role of the text is subsidiary and it is not in fact quite as good as the pictures. Indeed, one might at first be tempted to dismiss it as sub-Kipling, with rather too many Maori words: "Hear now, my mokopuna, how once long ago the people of the Kainga met on the marae . . ." seems, at first reading, disagreeably affected. But as the simple story of communal achievement gets under way, something in the conviction and consistency of the style quells such misgivings. In any case, the second and third books things get rather easier. This is partly because Bacon (the Australian principal of a New Zealand primary school) has decided on some sensible concessions: a glossary, a key to pronunciation, a note on the Maori numerals used for the page numbers. These books should have quite a strong appeal to children from about the age of eight onwards; and, if the eight-year-olds should need a little help, their parents or teachers will probably enjoy the process too.

The parallel history of Britain

Jennifer Westwood

KENNETH MCLEISH
Myths and Folk Stories of Britain and Ireland
200pp. Longman. £10.95.
0582123995

KEVIN CROSSLEY-HOLLAND (Editor)
Folk Tales of the British Isles
200pp. Faber. £9.95.
0571137865

The principal stories in Kenneth McLeish's *Myths and Folk Stories of Britain and Ireland* are some of the finest tales in the national literature, excerpts from Geoffrey of Monmouth's alternative history of Britain, including the story of Leir, the adventures of King Arthur and his knights, of Cuchulain and Brann, the tragedy of Laila and the ill-fated Woodwulf. All the more pity that the lucidity of the book's design is never matched by any clarity of concept or organization.

Aimed at young readers and advertised as a comprehensive work of reference, it is a disservice if you don't know the territory. Sometimes Mr McLeish is cavalier: in the very first pages of his "Additional Stories, Alternative Versions and Notes", he seldom distinguishes between different types of information, so we can rarely tell if we are reading "parallel" history, as he calls it, historical or scholarly commentary or what. At other times he clings unreasonably to the letter of his text. Why set the famous tale of Merlin and the Glastonbury Ring at Avebury simply because Geoffrey of Monmouth couldn't tell Avebury from Amesbury? If you read on in Geoffrey to chapter eight he plainly (for Geoffrey) says that the wondrous stone circle was Stonehenge.

Lack of editorial discretion runs through the retellings, too. McLeish sets out, he says, "to tell the basic stories straight through without interruption". This only sounds worthy. Storytelling is about seduction: the retellers of old tales are in the business of selling them to a new generation, and they must remain true to their text and also present it to best advantage. It serves neither the reader nor the tale to plod doggedly on through the thick and thin of ancient literature, including the quagmires.

This does not mean censorship or bowdlerization but there are times when one should heed the warnings of textual scholars and take avoiding action. Often it demands no more than our silence. Take Grendel's Mother. Do we need to pass on the poet's remark that she was, as McLeish puts it, "less deadly" than Grendel? Or should we listen to the great *Beowulf* editor Fr Klaeber, when he tells us that this was the Christian poet's attempt "to discredit the unbiblical notion of a woman's superiority"; that his inherited pagan plot requires that the second fight be harder than the first and that the destruction of the mere-wife be not just a mopping-up but a new peak of heroism on the road to the supreme test of a Germanic hero, the dragon-slaying? This is the perpetual dilemma of the reteller: text or story. Aptness is what counts. The wars and all approach is incumbent only upon translators.

The virtue of McLeish's retelling is its ac-

curacy. The stories are told in plain English. You do, of course, pay the price of simplicity and uniformity – you lose a dimension, the characteristic sound of stories shaped in particular languages or dialects. He leads us over the course at a canter, passing without a break in his stride from Cuchulain to Beowulf to Laila and Blodeuedd. It is meat and potatoes stuff – one wanted the heaped eates and dainties. He finds Malory "moving", yet his own account of the casting away of Excalibur is curiously without resonance. Not for him the souging of the wind on the desolate lake shore, the verbal music: "What did you see?" asked Arthur. "Wind and waves," said Bedivere. "Go back!" said Arthur angrily. "Do as I tell you!"

Kevin Crossley-Holland's *Folk Tales of the British Isles* shines by contrast. Quietly presented in an elegant volume first published by the Folio Society in 1985, it is a blueprint for such collections. His introduction tells us precisely what his material is – British and Irish folk-tales collected in the field and given in the words of great storytellers and collectors, and also literary retellers – and how he has organized it. He groups his stories sensibly by theme ("Ghosts", "Kings and Heroes", "Fairies") and within groups arranges them – do not underestimate this bonus – "with an eye for what makes the most satisfying artistic progression". He gives each group its own introduction. The reader is gently prepared to receive the tales and get the last drop of goodness from them.

It is hard to fault him. Outside Katharine Briggs's monumental *Dictionary of British Folk-Tales* (1970-71) you will not find a better sampler of the richness and variety of the British storytelling tradition, even her own (1977), which did not include Irish stories. The old favourites are all here – "Tom Hickathrift", "Jack and the Beanstalk", "Whittington", the pre-Goldilocks "Three Bears" – as well as a number of tales repeatedly but undeservedly passed over in favour of Andersen and Grimm: "The Black Bull of Norway", "Asspattell", "The Three Heads of the Well". There is also a handful of local legends, often little known outside their own counties, among them "Byard's Leap" and "Black Annis". Of the sixty-six stories (plus "envoi"), there is only one I would have left out and that is "Croglin Grange", a vampire tale from Augustus Hare, to whose great gifts as a raconteur it perhaps owes its place in the Briggs Dictionary. I wouldn't care to have to defend it as having much to do with British tradition.

Coming direct from different sources, the stories are couched in speech antique and modern, rustic and educated, colloquial and literary, of varying degrees of difficulty. The Border ballad of "Young Tamlane" is not easy even with glosses, and it is a far cry from the pithy Suffolk of "Tom Tilt Tot", the English "Rumpelstiltskin", to the Victorian prose of Sir John Rhys, which can seldom represent (in English) what his (Welsh) informants actually said to him. Don't let this or the critical apparatus prevent you from putting the book in the hands of children. They'll like Hannah Firmin's woodcuts and grow into the language. It is a privilege to hear these tales in the forms which are the closest we can get to a once-living tradition. It is the true music of the Pied Piper.

Children's paperbacks in brief

Stephanie Nettel

HOWEY. *The Nature of the Beast*. 100pp. Fontana Lions. £1.95. 0 00 672582 1. First published 1985. Set in a Lancashire town hit suddenly by unemployment, this is a bleak novel narrated by a young boy, born into a family where his own war against his mother: "I could feel a cold blue flame, like a fire in my belly." It won both the Whitbread and Young Observer Prizes, but an uneasy mingling of real-life adventure (hunting a killer in the moors) with some heavy symbolism (the beast abroad in society today) prevents it from being quite the masterpiece this powerful young writer is capable of achieving. (Over 11.)

KEVIN CROSSLEY-HOLLAND. *The Dead Boy*. 100pp. Faber. £3.95. 0 571 13879 9. First published 1982. Shirley Felts's drawings, both wistful and menacing, exactly capture the atmosphere of this splendid retelling of a legend from East Angles. Crossley-Holland modifies the dialect but retains a regional lilt and demands to be read aloud – these tales are as much to an adult's taste as a child's. (Over 11.)

STEPHEN CRANE. *The Red Badge of Courage*. 160pp. Puffin. £1.75. 0 14 035055 1. First published 1995. "The Veteran", published a year after the main novel, adds the last remnants of true courage to the life of Henry Fleming, the youth whose dreams of glory have entered the American Civil War.

CRANE. *Children of the Dust*. 160pp. Puffin. £1.95. 0 00 67261 6. First published 1985. The message of this novel is a disturbing note: that the world of evolution, that eventually a clean, unadorned world may appear from the ashes of the story of three generations rolls on with a sense of inevitability, though following a familiar pattern of evolutionary horror, ruthless scientific discovery and intellectually superior mutants. (Over 11.)

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Exploiting the conventions

Isobel Armstrong

JACK ZIPES
Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary
feminist fairy tales in North America and
England
270pp. Gower. £17.50.
0566089137

DAVID HENRY WILSON
There's a Wolf in My Pudding: Twelve twisted,
tortured, grim and gruesome tall and terrible
tales
Illustrated by Jonathan Allen
132pp. Dent. £7.95.
0460063409

Feminist novels and poetry, feminist criticism—
not why not feminist fairy stories? *Don't Bet on
the Prince* is an anthology of fairy-tales for
children and adults, all reconceived according
to feminist principles. These are followed by
a number of recent scholarly critiques of
fairy-tales as instruments of patriarchal culture
and prefaced by an essay on the same theme by
the editor, Jack Zipes. Determined to show
that he is one prince women can bet on, Zipes
swipes at the conservative male hegemony
which has exploited the mass-market fairy-tale
in order to make women complicit in their
subordination. It is a pity that his joyless
psycho-sociological, psycho-genetic, scientific
jargon will make readers give up or search for
their own machete to cut through the briars of
the post-Lacanian language which surrounds
them. For he has an important point. When
oral fairy stories were written down by male
collectors such as Charles Perrault and the
Grimm brothers, they were radically censored.
Their rapid dissemination through Europe in
the nineteenth century is of considerable cultural
significance. And anyone who has read a
Ladybird Book version of "Jack and the Bean-
stalk" which shows Jack's newly rich mother,
attired in new medieval clothes, sitting idly in
her Elizabethan hall with wall-to-wall carpeting,
will not quarrel with Zipes's analysis of the
insidious ideological use to which fairy-tales
can be put.

The reprinted stories belie the questions set
up in the introduction by being energetic,
arresting and often subtle. Some of them reverse
conventional paradigms. Jeanne Desy's
"The Princess Who Stood on Her Own Two
Feet" makes a princess decide that she will not
after all suppress her energies and marry an
egotistic prince who dislikes her tallness, and
drives her to silence. Some give a new content
to old forms, such as the Merseyside Fairy
Story Collective's beautifully written adaptation
of "Snow White" in terms of economic
exploitation. In the same way Jane Yolen re-
writes "Cinderella" in her lyrical "The Moon
Ribbons" by enabling the magic godmother to
release the heroine into choices rather than
passivity. In this category is Margaret
Atwood's superb "Bluebeard's Egg", where
the knowing heroine cleverly rewrites the story
of Bluebeard only to find that her dull husband
is actually becoming a Bluebeard.

Other stories simply use the conventions of
magic spells, riddles, quests and tasks to create
a new content. Angela Carter's children's
story, "The Donkey Prince", burlesques these
conventions with brio and delicacy. A pining
queen stares at the wallpaper "as if there were
wonderful patterns on it that she alone could
see". Tanith Lee and Meghan B. Cullins write
with equal sensitivity for adults.

It is when one comes to the briar, demystified,
grumpy reconceiving of Hans
Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" in Joanna
Russ's "Russalka or The Scorpion of Bohemia"
that doubts and questions emerge. These
works are confirmed by the literal-minded, pos-
sivist rationalism of the feminist critiques com-
prising the last third of the book.

The essays close on an account of the fairy-
tale. In terms of the reduction of women to
marketable commodities, an assault on female
assertiveness, and the coercion of sexual
awakening into the passivity of patriarchal
marriage. Objecting to facile, moral readings of
female sexuality, they produce a reproving
alternative didacticism of their own. Menu-
pauline stepmothers and feeble princesses are
alike heralded. "She trades her Independent
self-hood for subordination", Kuran E. Rowe
writes of "Beauty and the Beast" in "Feminism

and Fairy Tales". In order to reach such read-
ings the writers have to assume that there is a
single meaning carried by each tale. There is no
suggestion that the paradigms of fairy tales
might be open or ambiguous, or that their con-
ventions might be a form of exploration and
enquiry rather than an exposition of patriar-
chal imperatives.

If fairy tales are so disabling, why rework
them at all? Or if their conventions have an
inexhaustible capacity for new interpretation,
what is important about them? Lévi-Strauss
thought of myth as an open form. It is a delicate
negotiation with oppositions which seeks to
find an imaginative explanation for cultural
contradictions. The opposition between sleep
and waking in "The Sleeping Beauty" would
become an exploration of the contradictory
demands on feminine sexuality, rather than the
inertia for which the princess is condemned in
this volume. The tale's popularity in the

Little horrors

George Szirtes

TED HUGHES
Flings the Vampire Bat and the Kiss of Truth
Illustrated by Chris Riddell
96pp. Falter. £5.95.
0571 138411

If you stare through the window of any video
shop in Britain you are likely to get a very
unpleasant picture of the world. This is
because of the amount of rubbish displayed
there because you know that the rubbish
answers a need, is perhaps even not quite
rubbish, not quite vicious enough. We have given
ourselves an appetite for such things, basically
a childish appetite. We move from blood to
blood, from horror to horror, from cliché to
cliché: the heroes merge, the villains merge,
the adventures merge. At the heart of it is some
fearful myth of survival at any price.

Survival is one of the key themes in Ted
Hughes's book for children. We begin with a
cockle called Atila who does nothing but
survive. The language in the first few pages is
sharp, rhythmical, and plays with rhyme. Un-
fortunately the episode goes on far too long:
the individual threads lose meaning and the
language starts to flag. Hughes too loses in-
terest, and transfers his attention to Flings, a
vampire, who wishes to be human. There could
have been a story in this, but since there are no

humans in the book the wish remains mean-
ingless. Characters begin to swim in and out
leaving us with nothing but a vague impression
of panic. The cockle is quite forgotten. A
vampire killer is introduced, and a brainless beauty
queen. Soon Flings is out of the story, which
now begins to move with such breathless pace,
with so many changes of scale and focus, that it
is difficult to keep track of what is happening.

There are vampires, rats, witches, a post-
Holocaust scene and a snake who stands for
Truth. The beauty queen changes from bride
to doll, to rat, to normal size again. In the end
we are reintroduced to Flings, who has turned
into a jester, and are threatened with a sequel.

Throughout the book the characters are
treated as if they were rag dolls to be flung with
great force at whatever wall happens to be
nearest. As in the videos and the adventure
books, nothing matters except that violent
things must happen in quick succession. To say
that Ted Hughes has thrown this book together
in a quite arbitrary fashion, that he has popu-
lated it with clichés of horror, that he has tried
to give it some conviction by hinting at a
spurious quest for Truth, that there are no more
than a few sentences in which his great gifts
shine through, is not to say that some children
will not like it. The survival theme runs deep in
us and the same old horrors can be rolled out
time and again. The true horror of the book,
however, lies not in the creatures evoked by
the text, but in the emptiness at its heart.

David Henry Wilson's *There's a Wolf in my
Pudding* rewrites well-known fairy-tales with
friendly cynicism. Good for a television or pan-
tomime sketch, its updating iconoclasm will
make a few jaded children laugh. Though in-
ventive it is ephemeral in comparison with the
work Zipes brings together.

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author of *Dictionary of Fairies*.

Letters

Russian Emigré Writers

Sir, — In a context of informed general aware-
ness of the current situation of Russian litera-
ture outside Russia, Donald Fanger's "A
Change of Venue: Russian journals of the
Emigration" (November 21) could be ignored
as a piece of mistitled trivialization. But no
context exists, and it is worth pointing out
some of the ways in which Professor Fanger
may have misled or deterred the unsuspecting.
For the past fifteen years, the "third wave"
has been adding its talents to those of the ear-
lier Russian émigrés, and the émigré journals
now contain a large, complex and important
body of literary texts. This situation arises not
only because the earnest and unsophisticated
Russians lack self-discipline and write at
great length, which is one of the sillier plati-
tudes that Fanger recycles, but because there is
a large number of émigré authors and they
have a lot to say. Their writings need to be
taken seriously and analysed, not passed over
with a smug reference to a five-year-old survey
article or written off as an instant archive. It is
seriously misleading to suggest that Russian
literature in emigration is produced mainly by
émigré writers working out the frustrations
of accumulated after the Thaw froze over.
The most significant characteristic of recent
Russian émigré literature is not inverted
realism, but the emergence of some impor-
tant writers who were never members of the
émigré, and who are trying to create a Russian
literature that is beyond politics. These writers
include Joseph Brodsky, Eduard
Limonov, Sasha Sokolov and Aleksei Tsvet-
kov. They tend to write short books using lan-
guage and concepts that have very little to do
with *Myr mir*, or Tvardovsky's or any other
realism.

It is also seriously misleading to imply that
the Shnyavsky-Khmelitsky incident is some-
thing representative of recent Russian émigré
literature. And Fanger's discussion of the in-
cident is anyway short-sighted. The fact is that a
substantial proportion of post-war literature
has been generated by the desire to exact re-
venge for real or imagined affront, and a cor-
respondingly high proportion of writing about
literature is made up of attempts to refute
consequent slights. It is entirely legitimate,
and not surprising at all, that certain Russian
émigré authors, freed from the restraints that
accompany writing (for publication or not) inside
the Soviet Union, should make their work spe-
cially and personally. It is equally legitimate that
those who feel offended should publicly ex-
press their objections.

There is nothing reprehensible in the fact
that one émigré journal should present one
side of a story and another a different one.
That is what literary journals are for in open
societies, and the literary journals of the Rus-
sian emigration are no more ghetto-like than
those of the United States. That any particular
journal does not open its pages to certain
points of view indicates precisely the presence
of principles, not their absence. The kind of
journal to which a single forum may be
closed to all is proper to the academic do-
main, and the two collections Fanger cites with
approval belong to this domain. To denigrate
others for not behaving like academics is not
very perceptive. Not that the Russian writers
who spoke at the third wave conference in 1981
were any more "principled" than in their
public statements on their home ground; as I
remember, they were their usual spirited
and articulate selves, and the published pro-
posals capture this quality very well.
Finally, unless Professor Fanger has some
new evidence to offer and is prepared to pre-
sent it, he should not have permitted himself
to write about the émigré situation about "Western
governmental subsidy". Or does he be-
lieve that in the Western world, subsidies
undermine the artistic and ideological
vitality of the subsidized product?

Y. S. WATTS
St. College, Oxford.

The Angel Literary Award has been won
by Donald Fanger for his book *The History of
the Emigration* (Dent); the second prize, in
category 1, is awarded to Ronald
Blythe for *The Short Stories of Ronald Blythe*

Caitlin Thomas

Sir, — John Kelly's review (November 21) of
Caitlin: A warning absence by Caitlin Thomas
with George Tremlett is, I feel, unfair and
biased, and does less than justice to the book.
Mr Kelly complains that Caitlin is "too self-
centred to tell the truth". But what is the truth
in any account of such a stormy relationship as
that between Caitlin and Dylan Thomas? The
inside of such a tortuous marriage could never
be accurately presented, even by the two main
participants. What Kelly conveniently ignores
is that Caitlin claims that there was "something
magic" between her and her husband, and that
they loved each other.

Kelly also points out that when family com-
mitments interfered with Caitlin's desire to
share the limelight with her more gifted hus-
band, "she abandoned her infant son to her
mother, left her second child alone night after
night in blitz-tom London, and finally under-
went an abortion at six months so that she
could accompany Dylan to America 'to give
myself a bit of fun and enjoyment'".
Were not the children Dylan's as well as
Caitlin's? Why is no mention made of his
appalling role as father? When the first baby,
Llewellyn, was born, for example, the father
was nowhere in sight and became jealous of the
new intruder. When Aeron was born, he was
absent, yet again, and first came to see his wife
in hospital when the baby was one week old.
When Caitlin went back home, she not only
found the flat dirty and untidy, with unwashed
dishes everywhere and empty beer bottles all
over the place, but also an unmade bed. As
Caitlin reveals, "I only had to take one look at
our crumpled bed to realise that Dylan had had
some other woman in it while I'd been in hos-
pital". That would not be easy for any woman
to swallow and accept.

Finally, nowhere does Kelly give space to
Caitlin's view that Dylan was "always like a
child", wanting "baby comforts". At one time,
for example, she would run a bath for him and
lay out dolly mixtures and lemonade. The fact
that some men, however gifted, require
mothering by a wife is something that she knew
about. The strains, tensions, conflicts and
contradictions that this could create were,
undoubtedly, only a part of their tragic and
complex relationship.

JUNE PURVIS
Oxford Polytechnic, Headington, Oxford.

Beckett's Plays

Sir, — It was indeed a relief to me not to provide,
in all that great expanse of words, the docu-
mentation now kindly supplied by Nicolas
Walter (Letters, November 21), particularly
with regard to the text of *Godot*. But I do not
accept what Walter seems blithely to assume,
that the word "complete" in the title of a book
gives us the right to expect everything a writer
has written. "Complete" is a convention,
understood by everyone (I had thought) to be
so, like a poet's "Collected" poems; it means
everything a writer wishes to preserve or see in
print. Is Beckett not to be allowed to discard
his botches? (The *Roughs* for theatre and
radio, included in the *Complete Dramatic
Works*, are rough enough.) *Human Wishes*, an
"early unpublished play" — or a fragment of
one — is in print in Ruby Cohn's edition of
Beckett's *Disjecta*, published by John Calder.
As far as I know no printed edition of *Elench-
io*, another unpublished work, exists, but the
manuscript is made available to scholars. We
must surely assume, until otherwise notified,
that there are no later plays than *What Where*
(first performed in 1983 and published in
1984), the last play printed in the *Complete*
volume. Incidentally, since I went so far as to
describe *Krapp's Last Tape* as a "pivotal"
work, I regret that its date was given as 1956,
when the play was first published and per-
formed in 1958.

ALAN JENKINS
35 Aldridge Road Villas, London W11.

Sir, — Precisely because it was an occasional
publication, the *Complete Dramatic Works* of
Samuel Beckett won't be reprinted in its
present form; nevertheless Nicolas Walter
(Letters, November 21) is right — it was a
mistake to revert to the text of *Waiting for*

Godot as it was originally published by us.
However, even the 1965 text, and those of
other plays in their current editions, could be
seen as unsatisfactory. To quote from the
jacket of James Knowlson's edition of Samuel
Beckett's production notebook to *Happy Days*
(published in 1985 and not so far noticed in
your pages):

In the 1960s Samuel Beckett started to direct
productions of his own plays, and his activities have
been permanently recorded in the pages of the
personal notebooks that he prepared meticulously
for each production. These notebooks provide a
much better guide to the way that Beckett now
"sees" his plays in the theatre than do the printed
texts that are available in English. In working so
closely on staging his plays, he has sometimes cut or
altered the text, and particularly the stage directions,
so that current editions may reflect a state of the
work that, in the theatre itself, he has long since
abandoned.

In the spring of 1988 we shall be publishing,
together with Grove Press, the notebook to
Godot, and others will follow. Implicit in these
notebooks are revised performing texts of the
plays to which they refer, and, subject to the
approval of the playwright, they will be
published separately in due course.

FRANK PIKE
Faber and Faber, 3 Queen Square, London WC1.

Verbalizing

Sir, — The inverted commas John Lucas puts
round "problematising", "privileging" and
"prioritizing" in his article "Absence into pre-
sence" (November 14) seem to sound an nolo-
getic note for the use of these hideous forma-
tions, but in that case why adopt them? They
can have, however, the function of obscuring
rather than clarifying meaning, and Mr Lucas
seems to use them in that way. Supposing he
had said that critics should "give preference" to
William Hale White and Robert Tressell over
E. M. Forster, Clare over Tennyson, the propo-
sitions might seem self-evidently absurd. To
suggest as he does that White, Tressell and
Clare should be "prioritized", with inverted
commas round the word, may sound compara-
tively harmless, but amounts to the same thing.

JULIAN SYMONS
Groton House, 330 Dover Road, Walmer, Deal,
Kent.

'The Church in Crisis'

Sir, — George Steiner's review (November 7) of
The Church in Crisis by Charles Moore, A. N.
Wilson and Gavin Stamp may have led some of
your readers to the book itself.

A. N. Wilson's contribution, "The Clergy",
is stated to be "informed with theological
awareness and with a genuine perception of the
relevant dimensions". I have in point out that
the reference to me in that section on page 128
is entirely untrue. I have never at any time
sought to "devise a theological examination
which is a substitute for the Oxford Theology
Degree". I do not believe "that in order to do
well in the theology schools at Oxford today
you have to subscribe to heresy etc". Such
allegations are totally without foundation.

I do hold that theological education and min-
isterial training should combine belief in the
scriptures with responsible scholarship and in-
tellectual integrity.

GEOFFREY N. SHAW
Wyelie Hall, Oxford.

'From Prague to Paris'

Sir, — In her otherwise correct description of
my views on structuralism in *From Prague to
Paris* (November 21), Ann Jefferson suggests
that it is in Lévi-Strauss's aesthetics that I find
(and blame) the core of his revulsion against
modernity. However, I rather agree with the
anthropologist's bold attack on the avant-
garde ideology of modern art and its ex-
perimental myth, which indeed I find as cogent
as the criticisms of, for instance, E. H.
Gombrich. As I take pains to stress, Lévi-
Strauss's sound "criticism of modernism in art
does not stand or fall with his critique of
modernity". In fact, in order to vindicate the
social culture of modernity one is bound to
question many a key tenet or assumption in the
modernist creed.

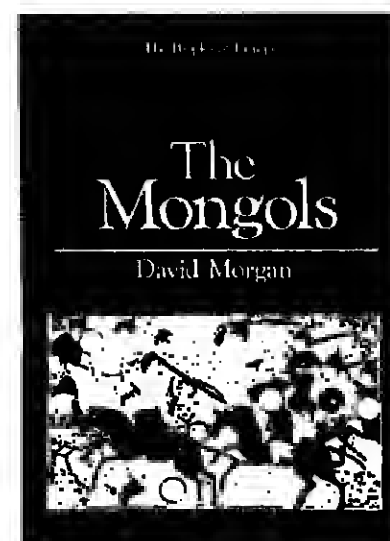
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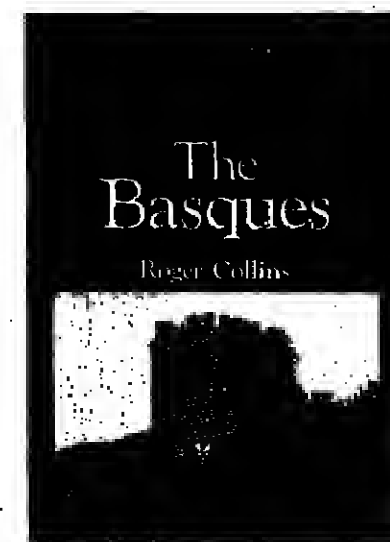
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COMMENTARY

Approaches to evil

Keith Brown

SHAKESPEARE
Macbeth
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

Two *Macbeths* for the price of one: interlarded examples of Director's Theatre and of actor's psychologizing, seasonably packed for bleak November in a big bare black box of a stage, like an illustration to a book on German Theatre in the 1920s. The audience had no doubt that here was an evening full of good things, if perhaps interspersed with some failures.

Psychology first, then. Jonathan Pryce and Sinead Cusack (*Macbeth* and *Lady*) have lately been explaining how they came to their chosen interpretation of their roles partly by reading up on some of the nastier English murders of recent years. And no doubt they did; but for Mr Pryce their chosen line also noticeably solves the difficulty of playing *Macbeth* with a leading lady who has a serious problem of goodness. Miss Cusack has every qualification for her part; but offstage she nowadays is reported to bewitch whole households of interviewers by a dazzling aura of sheer niceness: an impression of gentleness and modesty far beyond mere standard stage charm. The reality behind this veil (a Terry? or a Bergman?) doesn't matter. What does, is that despite her technical skill the snare was in beginning to hang over her stage work. However well depicted, the primitive raw power Shakespeare's lines attribute to *Lady Macbeth* just isn't felt when you can't suppress those other signals telling you - however illusorily - that in *propria*

persona this being is good, gentle and happy: and what can *Macbeth* do then?

Clearly what he must not do, is further unbalance their joint performance by himself adopting any kind of epic, satanic approach to the depiction of evil: far better to focus, as here, on the nuances, sickness, isolation and inadequacy that more normally accompanies evil in real life. Thus these *Macbeths* seem to have been oriented into becoming moral monsters by the pain of their childlessness, compounded by gnawing grief at the past loss of a child. "I have given suck", she says, and crumples physically at the memory she has stirred - her husband in equal anguish springing forward to comfort her - even before she has finished the terrible words of that speech. He himself is a born father, still recognizable beneath the progressive perversion of his nature. Even while meditating his murder, he is unable to resist fooling charmingly, and with real warmth, with Banquo's young son. The inadequacies and lurking neuroticisms slow steadily: the tell-tale gesture of the hand, flicking uselessly before face and forehead at moments of tension, helping us to believe this really is a man who could see that almost tangible danger before him. We see a couple both of whose mental resilience is being undermined by lack of sleep: thus Mr Pryce's *Macbeth* makes Banquo's Feast an even more socially excruciating evening for his courtiers - and the increasingly helpless wife - than the text suggests. Afterwards, alone in the dark inn, exhausted, they seat themselves at opposite ends of the long banquet-table, the size of the disaster so far beyond recognition that they talk calmly.

This finely executed "domestic" reading of *Macbeth's* personality also has the minor advantage of fitting in fairly comfortably with

the director Adrian Noble's own deafness to the inescapably declamatory vein in many of the lesser characters' lines. (It seems unforgivable, for instance, just when the play needs full power for lift-off, to entrust the Bloody Sergeant's speech to an actor who patently cannot handle Shakespearean-heroic verse. And lack of "slipping" often leaves long speeches badly blurred for auditors who do not already know the text in some detail.) But in the closing scenes the play exacts its own price for this deletion of the monumental from its hero's character, the doomed king left seeming less like a great bear tied to a stake, than an overpromoted executive predictably cracking up under stress. Both scale and excitement are lost; and Noble's attempt to restore them via a flurry of Brobdingnagian stage-effects (vast banners, shattering walls, etc) does not work - at least, not if you have been listening to the words, or even to the audience. I have never before heard a major production of *Macbeth* end to the sound of a smothered giggle.

This is a great pity, because up to this point the production has shown extraordinary visual skill (with the exception of the scene between Macduff and Malcolm, where two able actors are most unfairly miscast vis-à-vis each other). The performance is without interval, and other reviewers have already praised the poetic deftness of the way speed is maintained by the

transitions between scenes - Banquo's apparent shroud, for instance, proving to be the table-cloth for the ensuing feast. But less justice has been done to Noble's choreographic gift, which achieves marvellous moments of beauty that somehow don't in the least undercut the horror of what we see. The murder of the trapped Macduff family can rarely have been more moving, yet the sight of that liquid pyramid of white - the tall Penny Downie, with her children swirling about her - blown about the stage by the shifting winds of fear, stays in the mind with a separate delight. Children are prominent in this production, lightly underlining the *Macbeths*' own childlessness. The big black box, with its countless silently-opening invisible doors does its work well too. But will the RSC ever again think a little about the question of accents? The magnificently imprecise, quietly professional, speak in the accents of Cheltenham Ladies' College: accidentally, no doubt; but the effect is still very right. But at other moments one cannot tell whether *Macbeth* is supposed to be talking with a lord or an attendant, yet we need to know, to be sure how to take his tone. It is radical cant, to pretend that we can shut our ears to this kind of uncertainty, when watching Shakespeare productions where nearly every other detail is deliberately offering us some sort of cue.

Capering with the ghosts

Wilfrid Mellers

NIGEL WILLIAMS
Country Dancing
The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

In California recently I met a young woman who, eschewing the plastic pretence of Los Angeles, was about to return to Bulgaria, where she had taught herself to play an indigenous goatskin bagpipe. The survival of this vanishing art might even depend on her return since on her last visit, seeking gue-blowing peasants on the desolate steppes, she'd found them armed with a portable tape recorder on which to preserve her performance for the benefit, if not of posterity, at least of their own children and children's children.

This is not radically different, though a shade more farcical, from the situation in Britain during the first two decades of this century, when Cecil Sharp and a few real composers such as Holst, Grainger and Vaughan Williams were "collecting" songs and dances which the folk knew to be actually, if not aesthetically, dead and done for. About Cecil Sharp - or rather about the themes latent in his life and work - the lively and many-talented Nigel Williams has made a theatrical entertainment somewhere between a play and a musical. Folk drama at several removes is a tricky assignment; the more credit to this piece, which is intelligent, revelatory, and by the end strangely moving.

At the beginning the Cecil Sharp figure - presented with a touch of bourgeois complacency but without condescension by Richard Easton - is interviewing and notating songs and dance tunes from a centenarian fiddler Ted Rogers, whose earthy virility, tempered by arthritic creakiness, Stuart Richman has caught perfectly. As raconteur, in between his fiddling, Rogers spills out to Sharp and us the story of his life: which is re-enacted as the past, through the medium of music, becomes present: folk-song and dance reveal a "way of life" which in communal terms is rawly vigorous and, in Sharp's phrase, "not too clean", and which in personal terms involves jealousy, treachery and blind hate as well as passion. Both his story and the communal dancing are light-years from bell-ringing morrising on the vicarage lawn. (That the real Sharp had some awareness of this is evident in his account of the life of the people from whom he collected songs in the Carolinas, where folk culture was less moribund than in Britain.)

In *Country Dancing* the fictional Sharp is himself transported into a past become pre-

sent. His authority as collector and collator is equated with historical authoritarianism; translated into a Squire to the rude mechanics, he becomes, with encroaching industrialism, a harsher and more inhumane taskmaster. The agrarian world - that dear old "organic community" - is destroyed both from within by human passions, the more violently self-destructive because minimally self-aware; and also from without by the blind force of Progress, with concomitant social injustice, sometimes no more than half-conscious, sometimes actively malevolent. The story's end is grim. Sam, the victimized agricultural labourer sent down under to Van Diemen's Land returns rich if not famous, to exact revenge on the Ted Rogers who had betrayed him, and to carry off to a never-never land where gold guineas hang on trees the two women, his wife and the sister who had married the traitor. Ted is left alone in declining ruralty, until he's reminiscently fiddling to Sharp the Outsider. Yet the play, if oppressive, is not depressing, for the life of the community and of the wild folk whose individualities make up its corporate identity carry us irresistibly with it. "Collecting" songs, says Ted, ain't much of a substitute for living, even when the living has been as hard as his. Sharp ends by ebulliently capering with the ghosts.

The involvement of drama with music and dance is thus not merely a technique, but the very heart of the theme. Special talents are called for from the players, who provide them: especially Gerard Murphy as Sam, whose corrupted and maybe corrupting return is a powerful piece of acting, while his singing is more than adequate to the folk-songs' archetypal dimensions. Whether the songs are narratively pertinent to his story or mythically lyrical, as in the wondrously regenerative "Seeds of love", he convinces alike in raucous Christopher Ashley, as Ted Rogers when young, sings with comparable spontaneity, and a penetrative edge to his voice appropriate to his deprived convoluted nature. His fiddling as a ghost, manages to suggest the immediacy of folk tradition.

Of course none of these musician-actors offers an experience of the searing intensity we get from a "real" folk-singer like Jennie Robertson or a real fiddler like Tommy Potts: nor would one expect or even want them to, since they belong to our temporally dominated world, not to the timeless mythology of folk. What matters is that, abetted by the four dancers and the four versatile instrumentalists (directed by the experienced Martin Carthy), they make past and present interlace in theatrical illusion - as, indeed, they do in fact.

The fluctuations of desire

Norman Bryson

Rodin: Sculptures and Drawings
Wayward Gallery, until January 25

At the beginning sculpture knew exactly what positions looked right for the human body. Egyptian rulers and scribes settle into place as comfortably as cats. Greece learned from its statues just when the body is in balance and when it is not. Antiquity passed on a repertoire of postures which Renaissance sculptors could rely on, for harmony. The classical canon had authority because its positions were utterly dependable. They took the poor forked animal and made him into a god. Yet for unfathomable reasons, in the century preceding Rodin this magnificent system seems to break down. The canonical positions fit the body less and less. They become a rhetoric. Forms which have revealed the body now obscure it. For the nineteenth century the question becomes: how to break the mould?

By Rodin's day the force of the canonical poses is so far spent, breaking the mould is comparatively easy. Scorning professional models and their self-conscious attitudes, Rodin has two or three girls move freely round the studio until they get used to the feeling of unwearied clothes. But what is this body that is so devoid of rhetoric? Now that all positions and movements are available, which look "right"? Rodin's answer is very practical: you don't know in advance. Suddenly, by accident, the model's position is perfect. "All I did was to copy the model chance had sent me." Sculpture opens itself to hazard.

Hazard demands a new medium: not marble - clay. Marble needs a *telos* - the goal needs to be known beforehand. Hazard requires process, the ability to erase and reconstruct, to show and pound back, continuously. In Rodin's hands clay is a first matter, prior to

Form and awaiting Form. The hands knead, pummel, distend, destroy and rebuild; the clay writhes and twists and coils (Rodin called his clay improvisations his "snakes"). If marble drives out the Unformed on its way to Form, Rodin's clay welcomes the Unformed and includes it.

In the wake of the classical canons sculpture opens itself to new hazards, and with Rodin these include desire. The nature of that desire can make one uneasy, and I suspect that in so far as Rodin is unpopular, this is a major cause. Desire in Rodin is almost the exact opposite of desire in such an artist as Ingres. In his bathers and odalisques Ingres repeats a tiny stock of bodily images which, for him, spell perfection. Fascination with these gives desire a focus and intensity that permit endless purification and refinement. In Degas also, erotic response is channelled into a narrow range of forms, specialized and inevitable forms which eclipse all others. But Rodin's erotic imagination is singularly unfocused (to those who dislike his work it can seem simply promiscuous). There are vague family resemblances between figures, but his desire is not enthralled to particular avatars of perfection. It, too, is an affair of chance, fluidity, aimlessness.

Hazard is important in Rodin. Part of the reason he can induce a certain squeamishness is that his work absolutely lacks the foreknowledge that Ingres or Degas have, concerning the direction of their desire. Directly related to this is the loss of the authorized, canonical postures, and Rodin's consequent vulnerability to the unpredictable movements of the model. Related also is the formlessness of the *prima materia*, clay. The convergence of these three randomized forces - external model, internal desire, and clay - in a single art can make Rodin's work feel dangerously undisciplined. The goal is to make clay, model and desire come together at the same point. But the chances of this happening are not only stacked

against him, it seems that Rodin is in some way unable to influence the outcome. By the same token, when they do come together, the result is pure gold. No amount of planning could have led to such a work, for example, as the "Crouching Woman". Here is a position of arms, legs and head that the entire tradition, from Egypt on, had missed; a position that speaks so directly to the emotions and to the body it is as though the body is being perceived primordially. At his best, Rodin takes us into Eden.

We are likeliest, in London, to know Rodin from the public monuments - "The Burghers of Calais", "The Age of Bronze", "St John the Baptist", "The Kiss". The reason the exhibition at the Hayward is so good is that it moves away from these authoritative final statements, into the hazardous life of the Rodin studio. By concentrating on a single period, 1877-83, the exhibition is able to reconstruct the processes of the studio vividly and in detail, and through this to direct our eyes towards the models, the clay, the fluctuations of desire, and Rodin's particular and fatal struggle against chance.

In this studio context, much becomes clearer, not least the nature of some of Rodin's weaknesses. It is apparent that he lapses into grandiloquence much, if not all, of the time. But at the Hayward you realize the odds his art was up against, the forces of hazard stacked against it; and you see a connection between these, and Rodin's recourse to external devices dragged in to give at least the semblance of order and planning. The most innocent of such devices are his afterthought titles, and more generally his use of the portentous: obviously improvised works that are given labels (but more than labels, token atmospheres) of "Dannid", "Psyche", "Polyphemus", "Paolu and Francesca", and the like. Less innocent is Rodin's tendency to suggest that, actually, the disorder and confusion are to do with something titanic in his personality.



"Despair", by Auguste Rodin, photographed by Hawes and Cokes in 1903-4, from the exhibition reviewed here.

This leads to all manner of gesturing: strain and contortion in the figures, overload in the emotional connotations. There is much self-puffing-up, notably in the region of sexual person. His titanic pursuit of Woman precludes his seeming ever to feel for, feel with, actual women. "When a woman combs her hair, she thinks she is only combing her hair: no, she is making a gesture which flows into the eternal rhythm." The problem is that in the leap from woman to eternal rhythm the woman as person is left behind. This screens out an entire range of emotional and aesthetic possibilities, to do with tenderness, interpersonality, relaxation and humour. His manipulation of the image of woman can be (but is not always) domineering; there is also a tendency to inflict pain; and in the drawings, much erotic banality. I would like to say that the titanism and manipulativeness are the price paid for the moments when Rodin strikes gold. But I realize they might turn the gold to dross, for some. The viewer should make up her own mind.

Innocence and experience

David Nokes

May We Barrow Your Husband?
Yorkshire TV

In his sardonic little tale *May We Barrow Your Husband?* Graham Greene allows his narrator William Harris to speculate on the young bride Poopy's state of fragile innocence. "It was a little like a novel which hesitates on the verge between comedy and tragedy. If she recognised the situation it would be a tragedy; if she were ignorant it was a comedy, even a farce. . . ." Few actors can better convey the insidious half-tones of hesitation between a sad little comedy and a tragic farce than Dirk Bogarde. In his role as Harris he tells Poopy (Charlotte Attenborough) that nothing would astonish him, and his smile contrives to suggest the infinite ironies of a fallen world. In adapting Greene's short story into a two-hour film, Bogarde has indulged himself with this central role as the observer observed. It is he, the non-participant in these comic, or tragic, rituals of sexual initiation who holds the focus of sympathy and judgment. Foreknowing all, yet still not immune to the ironies of desire, he coats this seedy little fable in which Greene comes closest to Maupassant with a tone of injured humanity.

Bogarde has turned Greene's story into a *Death in Venice* II: once again an ageing solitary artist stares out from the balcony of his hotel across the sea; once again a fastidious routine is interrupted by fantasies of sexual adventure. In both films knowledge is a poison which allows the central character to indulge simultaneous fantasy roles as either the saviour or the tempter of a beautiful young person. But these parallels also indicate the film's main weakness. For, like many visual interpretations of short stories, it lacks any sense of restraint or understatement. Greene's delicate satiric details are expanded and made explicit in both word and image.

Visually the presentation of a surprisingly deserted Riviera coastline as a place of towers and caverns, castles and pools is an interesting

attempt to evoke mythic echoes (but the shot of a tall phallic lighthouse directly after a discussion of impotence cannot be dignified by calling it irony). Bogarde's doomy tones as he gazes down at the honeymoon couple are overlaid with melodrama: "Not this hotel. Any hotel but this", he murmurs ominously in the twilight, as if to fill this white hotel with a chill Hitchcockian menace. David Yelland and Francis Matthews give effectively felicitous performances as the two interior decorators, Stephen and Tony. Where Greene's characters are unsavoury vulgar predators, these two exude a stylish high camp animation.

Contrasted with these sleek and epicene males, Charlotte Attenborough as Poopy with her pink cheeks, freckles and uneven teeth, is a Renoir among the Lelys. Lely is an appropriate name, since the story's subtext is provided by the life and poems of the Earl of Rochester. Harris, like Greene himself, an admirer of Rochester, is supposedly writing a biography of the Restoration poet. The film uses this detail for a series of parallels and allusions. Where Greene leaves the seduction of Poopy's husband, Peter undescribed, Bob Mahoney's film offers the sybaritic spectacle of a poolside orgy which is a blend of "A Rumble in St James's Park" and a Hockney print. Simultaneously Harris, in an attempt at a form of *artistic droit de seigneur*, invites the still virgin Poopy up to his room for a little champagne and Rochester. How many viewers, one wonders, are expected to pick up the irony when he begins to read to her "Naked she lay, clasped in my longing arms . . .", from "The Imperfect Enjoyment"?

At the heart of the film are a series of prolonged conversations between Poopy and Harris which form a dialogue of innocence and experience. In almost the film's final image she is caught in the revolving beam from the nearby lighthouse. Her exposure to the alternation of dark and light becomes a metaphor for the besitation between the worlds of comedy and tragedy. Yet as a metaphor it is also typical of the film's style which is clever, allusive and visually ravishing at the risk of self-indulgence.

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Battling against decline

Henry Kamen

J. H. ELLIOTT
The Count-Duke of Olivares: The statesman in an age of decline
733pp. Yale University Press. £19.95.
0300133907

For a quarter of a century J. H. Elliott has stalked the Count-Duke of Olivares through the archives of Europe. Twenty-three years ago, in his study of the Catalan revolt of 1640, he remarked that the destruction of the Count-Duke's papers (by fire in 1795) made it unlikely that his life could ever be given the detailed attention it deserved. Since then, he has patiently investigated various state collections and notably the private archive of the Duke of Melinaceli, with the fruitful results that are evident in this massive volume. He comments that "political biography is not at present very fashionable", but it is also evident that the documentation available must to a large extent determine the nature of the product - in this case there could be no way of presenting the subject other than by focusing on the single most significant personality of early seventeenth-century Spain. The end-product is an impressive and thoroughly documented survey of the political history and foreign policy of the reign of Philip IV.

Professor Elliott has not, of course, entered on uncharted territory. The reign of Philip IV is, after that of Philip II, the most studied period of early modern Spanish history, art and literature. In history, the pioneering work of

Antonio Dominguez Ortiz prepared the way for a generation of Hispanists, and Elliott himself has made a fundamental contribution not only by his own books, of which *The Revolt of the Catalans* (1963) is the most significant, but also by his nurturing of a generation of younger Anglo-American researchers, many of whom have now written major studies centred on the period. Despite the great amount of work that has been done, however, we have so far lacked any reliable general account, a lack here made good by a skilful interweaving of past and recent scholarship together with a wealth of new information which together help to create a solid and definitive survey of the politics and men of Spain's imperial age.

That there are no major surprises is a tribute to Elliott's own continuous scholarship, and to the steady output of other Hispanists. Foreign policy looms large: for someone who apparently never travelled outside Spain, Olivares showed a remarkable knowledge of the outside world and an instinct for its affairs: he collected maps and charts and in 1627 was able to instruct the Genoese ambassador about a proposed invasion of England by pointing out the detail on "six very clear and distinct maps". The most interesting portions of the book, however, deal with the Count-Duke in his domestic policy and his despairing attempts to impose some change on a reluctant Castile. We get a splendid, intimate view of the chief minister at work, which reveals both the strengths and the weaknesses of the man on whose shoulders the fate of the world's greatest empire rested. Elliott emphasizes Olivares as an "outsize personality", but also makes it clear that

the minister was a man very much alone, complaining of his isolation, of the lack of leaders (*cabezas*) in the country, of the fact that nobody was obeying the government, and that the nation was in decline. Few great leaders - can Olivares be regarded as one? - have been so negative as to write, as he did in 1638, three years after the outbreak of war with France, that "I find myself with no desire in this life but to go and die in the company of a few monks", and two years later, after the Catalan troubles, to affirm that "my only desire is to die". Much of this seems to confirm the classic analysis by Gregorio Marañón, that Olivares was a manic-depressive.

His policies were far from original, and Elliott looks at the "reformist inheritance" in order to place his imaginative schemes within the context of a generation of *arbitristas* and dissatisfied oligarchs, their opinions expressed in tracts and in the Cortes, who attempted to bring some long-needed change to Castile. However, it was typical of the Count-Duke that, as Elliott says, "the daring policy innovations in his programme for the government of Spain found no parallel in his conduct of foreign affairs. There was to be no deviation from the traditional lines of Habsburg foreign policy." The latter theme, which occupies nearly half the book, and takes us from the halcyon years of peace in the early century to the terrible débacle over the Mantuan War, the slide into the Thirty Years War, and the outbreak of hostilities with France in 1635, with Olivares pitting himself against Richelieu and Urban VIII and wrestling with the tortuous policies of Wallenstein, gives us easily the most satisfying

picture of Spain's objectives and actions during the epoch of the Thirty Years War available in any language.

Both at home and abroad, none the less, Olivares was a failure, so total a failure indeed that he was execrated as much in his own Castile as he was in Catalonia, and even Elliott makes no attempt to change the verdict: "Olivares correctly identified some of the central ills afflicting Castile and the Monarchy, and offered a number of antidotes... many of them failed, others cancelled themselves out, and still others wrought greater damage than any that they were designed to repair."

This definitive work restores to Olivares the attention that recent historians, dedicated more to social and economic history, have denied him, and it is to be hoped that it will encourage further enquiry into the amazing generation of reformers who, both under the Duke of Lerma and in the period after Olivares, made the early seventeenth century one of the richest periods of political discussion in Spanish history. For Professor Elliott these reform schemes were a response to the feeling of "decline", which continues for him to be the key-word to an understanding of the period, though some will differ from his view that "by 1700 the relative decline which the Count Duke had detected and struggled to reverse had spread to almost every area of Spanish life and thought". This volume, of proportions befitting the outsize subject it portrays, will take its place alongside Marañón's life of Antonio Pérez as one of the outstanding works of Spanish historical scholarship written this century.

Good for a laugh

A. J. Close

E. C. RILEY
Don Quixote
205pp. Allen and Unwin. £18.
0048000094
JOHN G. WEAVER
The Substance of Cervantes
290pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.
0521303160
P. E. RUSSELL
Cervantes
117pp. Oxford University Press. £8.95
(paperback, £2.25).
0192875011

E. C. Riley, John G. Weaver and P. E. Russell, all tackle, from their contrasted standpoints, the currently controversial question how far *Don Quixote* should be read as a funny book. Riley occupies a middle point in the controversy. His brief is to cover in around 200 pages Cervantes's life and works, *Don Quixote's* place in them, its eras of interpretation, and posterity's (including modern criticism's) reaction to it. Riley has fulfilled the task with a mixture of compression and thoroughness.

Students of Spanish and English readers of *Don Quixote* will find this a stimulating and helpful guide: it deals methodically with basic questions, and analyses major episodes in Part II (though none involving *Don Quixote* in Part I) in some detail. Riley's leading themes are: that *Don Quixote* presents a critical dialectic between "romance" and "realistic novel", framing the first within the second; that a distinction is to be made between the hero's noble ideals and his comic illusions; that Cervantes is peculiarly conscious of the ways in which men verbalize their experience and turn it into legend. An underlying assumption is Samuel Johnson's, thought that "very few readers, amidst their mirth or pity, can deny that they have admitted visions of the same kind" as Cervantes's two heroes.

Riley's main arguments raise difficulties which are not fully confronted. Cervantes's parody does not discriminate between the hero's "ideals" and "illusions"; rather, it suggests that the former are funny because they are lived illusorily. Yet it does, despite its richly chromatic overtones, discriminate between one species of "romance" (that embodied in the "illusions") and others. Riley blurs the distinction. And his conception of *Don Quixote's* "realism" can be met not only with the doubts notoriously attendant on that term, but also

with the objection that the setting of Quixote's adventures is evidently stylized according to the conventions of legend, farce, carnival, picaresque seaminess, and so on. And can *Don Quixote* plausibly be said to posit everyday reality as a criterion of lifelikeness and present a post-Jamesian world refracted in multiple perspectives? However, let me put these doubts in perspective by saying that Riley's discussion of *Don Quixote* rarely fails to take account of relevant evidence or to make intelligent allowance for alternative viewpoints.

Would that I could say the same for Weiger's book - bright in patches, yet rambling, blinkered, and prone to over-ingenuity and iconoclasm. His point of departure is a riposte to Russell's influential article "Don Quixote as a Funny Book" (1969), which pointedly contrasted the portentous interpretations of Cervantes's novel by modern critics with the merry reactions to it of seventeenth-century Spanish

readers. Agreeing with Russell that fun was all that Cervantes's readers found in it, Weiger attempts to rebut him by claiming that, in Part II, Cervantes portrays his readers as a lot of dolts, impervious to the matters of substance which underlie the book's humour. Running through Weiger's book is the theme that Cervantes's conception of literary composition involves audacious experiments with traditional elements in order to create something like a "literature of ideas" - for example, ideas about the mind's perception of reality and art's representation of it, the complementary functions of the soul's three faculties (understanding, memory, will) and the drama of their restitution from disorder to equilibrium. Underlying this book - as to some extent Riley's - is the premise that literature cannot simultaneously be funny and thought-provoking. Fun is frivolous; to be assigned to the superficial play-pen of "farce". Why should this be so? Are Boccaccio, Rabelais, Sterne and others merely far-

cal?

Cervantes's text is warped by Weiger's earnest sifting of it in quest of "substance" as he investigates the methods, which he considers audaciously novel, whereby Cervantes explores the psychology of optical illusion and creates in the reader's mind the same visual and acoustical impressions as are experienced by the characters. The line of enquiry is occasionally perceptive and potentially worth while, but Weiger is seemingly unaware that these techniques are not original to Cervantes, but are derived - and of course developed - by him from such masters of narrative as Heliodorus, Boccaccio and Ariosto, in whose works, as in Cervantes's, they serve to create suspense, involvement, theatrical immediacy. Neglect of these parenthetical functions of good story-telling results in distorted reading.

Russell, writing in the brief compass of the *Past Masters* series, has understandably taken Cervantes to mean, principally, *Don Quixote*. Orated the virtually impossible problems of choice confronting him, I think that he would have been better advised to devote more space to his principal theme - that *Don Quixote* is a supremely artful work of comic genius, almost wilfully misread by the Romantic tradition - and less to the summary of events in *Don Quixote* Parts I and II. That said, one must acknowledge that Russell's dry, deceptively plain prose has the knack of making incisive and iconoclastic judgments with almost casual brevity. The chapter on "Don Quixote as a Romantic Hero" and the conclusion illustrate this, doing much to explain how *Don Quixote*, even when seen as an inescapable product of seventeenth-century habits of mind, can still seem accessible to a modern mentality. In his book Russell insists on the eagerness of Cervantes's comedy, the supremacy of his parodic purpose, the derisive uncouthness of the hero's madness which subverts even his luckiest utterances, the irrepressible wit and playfulness of Cervantes's style. At the same time, he signals the delicate subtlety of Cervantes's irony and its affinities with Aristotle's humorous empathy with the chivalric tradition; he insists on the ambiguity of Cervantes's humour, which dislodges the reader from a comfortable sense of superiority; he highlights Cervantes's games with the fictionality of fiction, prompting reflection about its nature. In sum, if somewhat skimpy in explaining Cervantes's "art interwoven with laughter", the book does a good job in shaking up the reader's preconceptions.

Christo's

Two workmen were carrying a sheet of asbestos down the Main Street of Dingle;
it must have been nailed, at a slight angle,
to the same-sized gap between Brandon

and whichever's the next mountain.
Nine o'clock. We watched the village dogs
take turns to spritz the hotel's refuse-sacks.
I remembered Tracee's unbiodegradable fangs

from the time of the hunger-strikes.
We drove all day past mounds of sugar-beet,
hay-stacks, silage-pits, building-sites,
a thatched cottage even -

all of them draped in black polythene
and weighted against the north-east wind
by concrete blocks, old tyres, bags of sand
at a makeshift army post.

across the border. By the time we got to Belfast
the whole of Ireland would be under wraps
like, as I said, 'one of your man's landscapes'.
'Your man's? You don't mean Christo's?'

PAUL MULDOON

The glory of the garden

John Summerson

JOHN DIXON HUNT
Garden and Grove: The Italian Renaissance
garden in the English imagination 1600-1750
206pp. Dent. £25.
040048810
EDMUND WOODBRIDGE
Pricely Gardens: The origins and
development of the French formal style
190pp. Thames and Hudson. £30.
050013378
JULIUS GUFFREY
André le Nôtre
Translated by George Booth
30pp. Lewes: The Book Guild. £6.50.
08321518
A. C. SHEPHERD and G. A. JELICOE
Italian Gardens of the Renaissance
Snp. Academy Editions. £25.
050070682
KAREN JONES HELLERSTEDT
Gardens of Earthly Delight: Sixteenth and
seventeenth-century Netherlandish gardens
Snp. The Frick Art Museum, Pittsburgh,
Pennsylvania, in association with Indiana
University Press. \$15.
025232529

In the past ten or fifteen years there has been a marked shift of interest, both by the public and by scholars, from the stately home to the stately garden. With the public there may be a waning excitement in the now almost universal accessibility of the stately interior. Interiors excite curiosity but then compel attention to a diversity of objects, inducing a certain lassitude not always far short of boredom. Gardens do not do this. Interiors once dismissed, soundly bought, the garden comes as a blessed release.

With scholars it has been different. It is possible to feel that not very much more needs to be written about the architecture of English country houses but that on the design and making of gardens the sort of enquiries leading to acceptable history has a long way to go; especially if by "gardens" we mean the entire visual setting of the house, the house in a context of landscaped landscape. Furthermore, the history of the English garden seems to have become somewhat unbalanced, probably because of the enormous appeal of the "Pietruseque" both as a movement in the visual sense and because of its deep literary ramifications. Christopher Hussey's *The Picturesque* was published in 1927. It was a wonderfully infectious book, written by a young man deeply intrigued by his own heritage, the domain of Strawberry Castle in Kent. It was scholarly without being academic, a very personal literary adventure.

It was not till after the war that other writers began to take a serious interest in the landscape garden. Dorothy Stroud's monograph on "Capability" Brown came out in 1950, her *English* in 1966; Miles Hadfield's *Gardening in Britain* in 1960; Edward Malin's *English Landscape and Literature, 1660-1840* in 1966. The 1970s brought us the first numbers of *Garden History* (from 1973), John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis's literary anthology, *The Genius of the Place* (1975), Peter Willis's *Charles Bridgeman* (1977) and then suddenly in 1979, a book dealing with a part of the story which nobody had much bothered with, Roy Strong's *The Renaissance Garden in England*. In 1980 appeared the first number of the *Journal of Garden History*, in 1983 David Jacques's *Georgian Gardens: The reign of nature*, and now we have John Dixon Hunt's *Garden and Grove*.

Professor Dixon Hunt, like Roy Strong, approaches the subject from its early times. Strong went back a little further than Hunt but stopped at the Civil War; Hunt takes his departure from about 1600 and goes to the middle of the eighteenth century. In both books one discovers a conscious detachment from much of what has been written and a determination to set the subject on improved rails. In Hunt's book the detachment conveys a feeling that a sort of bogus patriotism has haunted garden history since the notion that something "peculiarly English" springs from the minds of Shaftesbury, Addison and Pope. He proposes to himself the question "How English was the English garden?" and his book is a logically

directed process leading to an answer.

The answer is already secreted in the duality of the book's title, *Garden and Grove*, a quotation from *Paradise Regained*. We come a little nearer to an explicit meaning in his chapter entitled "Art and Nature", where we are warned against "the lures of a Whiggish garden history which sees English connoisseurs moving surely from the lures of art to the liberties of nature". It is far more useful, he writes, "to chart the different kinds of relationships that were held to be possible between art and nature during this period". Later he faces the question squarely, stating that "responsibility for the English style came in large part from abroad". And abroad means Italy.

The book is in two parts. The first part looks at the Englishman in Italy, the grand tourist and his observations. These have been gathered by Hunt into a wonderfully rich harvest. The grand tourist was not only impressed by Italian creations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; he liked to feel that he saw beyond and through them to antiquity itself. He delighted in reconstructions of Roman gardens by Falda and Totti. Robert Castell, inspired by Lord Burlington, published his reconstruction of Pliny's villas in Tuscany and at Laurentum in 1728. Hunt reproduces a design by Hawksmoor (though he attributes it to an anonymous source) for the temple at Castle Howard, boldly inscribed with Hawksmoor's characteristic sense of fellowship with the ancients: "After the Antique, vid Herodotus, Pliny and M. Varo". It is not in the least like any known antique building nor, indeed, like any Italian building, but the heroic aspiration is there and it is interesting how strongly Hawksmoor, who never travelled, felt it. There is an excellent chapter on Ovid and his *Metamorphoses* which provided the thematic material for so many Italian gardens. A chapter on "Garden and Theatre" brings in the classical exedra, stepped as for a seated audience, sometimes grassed, and introduced as much for its intrinsic shapeliness as for any intention there may have been of presenting plays; and beyond this the contrivance of grottoes and pools which seem like scenes on the stage, and a general theatrical ambience persuading the visitor that he himself is an actor moving in a stage elysium. Cabinets of curiosity are significant attachments to the garden, contributors to the sense of variety which, Hunt rightly insists, is basic to the conception of the Italian garden. "Variety" is construed in two modes: first, variety obtained by division of the ground into "garden" and "grove"; and second, by the infinite animation and surprise of the garden, often with the aid of mechanical devices and the variable nature of the grove. Here we have the kernel of the argument.

The second part of the book traces with jealous care the authentic Italian thread in the English garden, starting with Theobalds and Nonsuch, glancing at Inigo Jones's masque designs, De Caus's work for Prince Henry and for the Earl of Pembroke at Wilton, the curious enterprise of the Danvers brothers at Chelsea, John Evelyn's layouts at Wotton and Albury and the unexecuted designs of Aubrey, the antiquary, who had never set foot in Italy. But the crucial chapter is the last, headed "Palladian Gardening". In this Hunt investigates the actual participation of Shaftesbury and Addison in the new gardening movement and is at pains to avoid the "proleptic" errors of some previous writers who have awarded them the role of prophet and innovator by working backwards from the novel situations which ensued. Thus, in the case of Shaftesbury he finds that his expressed taste for "things of a natural kind" must be read as a part of his political and moral philosophy and not specifically as a comment on gardens. Addison, he finds, discovered that Nature, cultivated in the *huguenot*, is art and he went no further than that. Stephen Switzer tried to give form to Addison's ideas and believed that in doing so he was approaching a Roman ideal - the primitive interconnections of gardening and agriculture. So it appears that neither Shaftesbury nor Addison nor Switzer crossed the border-line between the old and the new garden scene. Then there is Burlington. Hunt sees the Chiswick garden as "almost an open-air museum of architecture", but reduced from the antique and Italian scale to the English; an attempt to cast Italian architecture into good English just

as Pope had tried to do with Homer's text.

Finally, there is William Kent. Is there anything to be said about Kent which has not been said a hundred times? The problem, if there is one, is to define what, as a gardenist, he was trying to do. If he was trying to bring the Italian garden to England, he was not trying very hard. He could imitate the Aldobrandini grotto at Rousham, design the Praenestine terrace there and, at Stowe, build a perfect model temple in the vale of Venus. But there is nothing to suggest that he wanted so to dispose this alien furniture as to deceive the visitor that he was at Tivoli or Frascati. The English countryside keeps blowing in. At Rousham, a vista closes with a Gothic eye-catcher and the materials are all of the familiar English vernacular kind. It is all very easy-going. One knows what Walpole meant when he said that Kent "leaped the fence and saw that all nature was a garden". But was this "leap" an act of genius on Kent's part or simply a witty metaphor of Walpole's? It could be interpreted as a sort of artistic *laissez-faire*. What is beyond doubt is that Kent's sources were Italian gardens and so he becomes the last link in Hunt's Italian chain.

The outcome of the author's inquiry is neither staggeringly new nor very surprising. The value of the book is chiefly in the fascinating over-view of the Italian garden and the precision with which English minds are shown to have reacted to Italian garden art across a century and a half. The many illustrations are excellent and well integrated with the text. The effect of the book should be to expel a great deal of intellectual smog from "the English garden" before the age of "Capability" Brown. Kenneth Woodbridge's *Pricely Gardens: The origins and development of the French formal style* is a wholly different kind of enterprise, a straightforward history of French gardens of the highest status from the Middle Ages to Louis XIV, with two supplementary

chapters bringing the main thread of the story up to relatively modern times. Woodbridge tells us that in the first instance he envisaged something different - a study of the links between the English and French garden traditions. Such a book would be valuable and one hopes that he may yet attempt it. If he does, it will have the authority of the unique knowledge of the French side of the story which the writing of the present book has earned him. Notwithstanding its platitudinous and inappropriate title, it is an impressive work.

The book is in five parts. Part One introduces us, by way of manuscript illuminations, to the Gothic idea of *hortus conclusus* in which we see enclosures already laid out in *parterres* and adorned with a fountain. But soon the biblical figures vanish, mythological pagans take their place and the spirit of the *Hypocorismachio Poliphili* comes into play. That surreal masterpiece of 1490, written by an Italian whose name may or may not have been Colonna, found its way to France and appeared simply as *Le Souge de Poliphile* in 1546. The deep impression it made was not soon erased in either Italy or France and Woodbridge very plausibly suggests that Hardouin-Mansart's Ionic peristyle, playing by itself in a *bosquet* at Versailles, is a late derivative.

The mature Italian Renaissance, the subject of Part Two, came to France with the rather sad old architectural grammarian, Sebastiano Serlio, who, having at last found a royal patron to accept the dedication of his book on Roman antiquities (Book Four in the Treatise) arrived at Fontainebleau in 1541 and was promptly appointed, at the age of sixty-five, to be the French king's architect. At Fontainebleau he was kept busy till François I's death in 1547, producing more of the books of his treatise and starting another, known as Book Six, which was never printed but which survives in two

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Natural Emphasis: English versification from
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311pp. The Huntington Library, San Marino,
California. \$22.
0873280857

"Diverse folk diversely they seyde" on the Canterbury road, and a new batch of Chauceriana maintains that tradition of diversity, while indicating some interconnected areas towards which Chaucerian scholarship has again set its course: Chaucer's European background; the provenance of the distinctive Chaucerian narrative voice and tone; above all, a renewed commitment to the study of manuscript tradition and its literary implications.

N. F. Blake's study leads the way. A footnote to his recent edition of the *Canterbury*

Tales anticipated a companion volume, in which the editor's challenging and sometimes controversial view of the poem's manuscript tradition could find fuller expression. His new account of that tradition is wide-ranging and provocative in the best sense. Professor Blake's argument embraces a series of related propositions: the primary importance of the ragged Hengwrt manuscript, notwithstanding the habitual allure of the sumptuous Ellesmere manuscript; the belief that the order of the tales and tale-groups in both manuscripts is editorial rather than authorial, with Hengwrt representing a medieval editor's first shuffle through a set of Chaucerian originals, and with Ellesmere accommodating such revisions as greater editorial familiarity with the material dictated and further provision of non-authorial links allowed. A significant role is assigned to editorial (rather than authorial) and scribal rationalization to account for the extra material in Ellesmere (over a thousand "good" lines as a recent reviewer plaintively calls them). The circulation of the tales in manuscript before Chaucer's death is rejected, whatever exposure oral performance may have afforded them. Not least, Blake urges that questions of textual authenticity should be the servants of manuscript evidence rather than its masters.

Not all these views have found or will find favour. The notion that the judgments and contributions of the tidy-minded Ellesmere reviser are virtually indistinguishable from those of Chaucer remains a difficult one, even if, as some have surmised, that editor could have been an accomplished poet, Thomas Hoccleve. The possibility of tales circulating in manuscript before Chaucer's death remains a live one; and there will still be readers, quite aware of the "Chaucer on a pedestal" problem, who are nevertheless disinclined to abandon the belief that literary-critical judgment can help to distinguish a Chaucerian hawk (such as the Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale) from an imitative handsaw. The book casts an

austere gaze on the contribution which "purely literary" criticism can make to the solution of such textual problems. Few will share in full this determined scepticism, but all readers will find much to ponder from engaging with Blake's detailed and dedicated presentation of an intriguing case. In the context of the book's argument, there is a gentle Chaucerian irony in finding "addition" printed as "edition" on the final page.

Some implications of renewed interest in the manuscript tradition of the *Canterbury Tales* are discussed by Derek Pearsall, but it is through his reactions to other critical stances and styles that the book achieves its characteristic blend of penetrating observation and laconic good sense. There is little sympathy for those scholars (and the author cheerfully cites his own past lapses, as he now regards them) whose relentless dedication to making tales fit tellers, and meanings fit the comfortable verities of liberal consensus, leads to the persistent ironization of self-evidently non-ironic tales. Professor Pearsall scores freely off such critical donkey-drops — too easily, one feels, and yet the very recent provenance of many such ironist essays suggests that the author cannot yet be accused of belabouring the straw men of yesterday. Some readers will be disappointed with the book's reluctance to deliver any new theory to "explain" the whole poem; Pearsall's interpretative stance persuasively discounts such impatience, stressing Chaucer's constant delight in narrative indirection; his capacity for giving memorable expression to the relativities of perception and judgment (if not morality) which life generates and from which literature benefits; and the poet's innovative daring in narrative technique as he strives to harness and harmonize the potentially unstable results of frequently intense responses to traditional materials. Throughout the book there are generalizations with which to quarrel, aphorisms on which to chew, and *aperçus* for which to be grateful. It will not please those for whom humane eclecticism is a culpable form of critical indirection.

After an unhappily portentous opening, and scowling periodically at the same targets as Pearsall, David Lawton's lively and entertaining essays address the origins and deployment of a principal means (his narrators) by which Chaucer achieves his distinctive tone of artful indirection. At the end of a worthwhile chapter on the *Squire's Tale*, Lawton expresses concern that Chaucer criticism has yet fully to reflect the implications of both modern textual scholarship and the somewhat older study of sources, and adds a "tactful study of tone" and "the historical study of criticism" to his list of critical desiderata. Dr Lawton's book for the most part admirably practises what it preaches, but his warning about the failure of some of Chaucer criticism to embrace current textual scholarship is borne out in the unconvincing opening section of Susanne Woods's otherwise painstaking and interesting study. The primary focus of the work is the theory and practice of Renaissance versification, but the preliminary consideration of Chaucerian metrics is disappointingly brittle. Such consideration as there is of the significance, for the study of metre, of the Hengwrt-Ellesmere manuscript variants, the latter metrically regularized and "improved" by a medieval editor of, in Pearsall's words, "pedantic care", is relegated to a couple of footnotes. Professor Woods discusses someone's metrical practice — but was it Chaucer's?

Source study began long ago to chart Chaucer's association with French literary tradition. The extent of equivalent links with Italy has, perhaps, been less fully examined. David Wallace's new study joins other recent works in redressing this imbalance. Chaucer refers to Petrarch as "my malster", and to Dante as "the grete poete of Ytallie", but it is the puzzlingly unnamed Boccaccio from whom Chaucer derived crucial stimulus and with whose cultural and literary inheritance he would have felt most affinity. Wallace identifies telling parallels between the Naples to which the Florentine Boccaccio was often drawn and the London of Chaucer's literary youth; between the attitudes both writers had drawn from Dante about the importance of achieving a convincing vernacular eloquence; and between the native law, politics, available to both poets in which their attempts to develop such



William of Wykeham (1324-1404) lecturing before the New College, Oxford. Reproduced here from the Cambridge Illustrated History of the Middle Ages, Volume Three, 1250-1520, edited by Robert Fossier and translated by Sarah Hanbury-Tenison (350pp. Cambridge University Press. £25. 0 521 26648 7).

an eloquence would have to be rooted — for Boccaccio it was the material of the popular *conterini* tradition with its naive narrator, popular piety, and formulaic phrasing, like and scene, features with which Chaucer was long familiar through the ubiquity of English tail-rhyme romance. Medievalists know that Chaucer did to *Il Filostrato* in general terms; Wallace offers an illuminating section of close verbal analysis of that transformation and realignment process in action. Particularly striking is his examination of what Chaucer might have drawn from the more mature *Filocolo*, however hastily and patchily acquired the poet's knowledge of that work may have been.

Whatever other prominence it now enjoys, the Hengwrt manuscript still awaits its first translator. David Wright's new verse rendering of the *Canterbury Tales*, based on Robinson's text (albeit shorn of the tales of the Parson and Melibeus, judged, no doubt correctly, "wearisome" for the general reader), proves to be a vigorous achievement. His previous prose translation now overshadowed, Wright brings the deftness and resource of an accomplished poet to bear on the tales. Shrewd and sparing use of rhyme (all varieties and degrees), association, artfully sprung rhythms, and an alertness to syntactic patterning, lead a reader to trenchant colloquialism, and an ease to high eloquence. The care with which the undergraduates from Strother have their dialect marked is characteristic of a broadly based attention to linguistic detail. Inevitably there are problems, some of them insoluble: puns and learned word-play are mistle over crucial word-sets (for example, those deriving from *trouthe* and *pite*) are sometimes sacrificed to elegant variation; subtleties of pronoun use are concealed; and, capacious as the store-houses of modern vocabulary are, resources are, sometimes scarcely equal to the task — thus, whatever John, the lumpen gaffer in the Miller's Tale, is, he isn't a "gaffer" with that word's unhelpful associations of "me old pal, me old beauty"; or again, with the General Prologue Miller, the thick *knarre* dissolves into a flaccid adjective phrase; elsewhere the humanness of *womynhed* conveys into the unlovely designation of "femininity" (Coleridge's inappropriateness for the word *wolwithstanding*); while Nicholas, with his fruitfully ambiguous *moder fier hende*, reappears as the incomprehensible "Fly Nicholas". That said, it would be a stony-hearted reader, who, treading the last of a long and chosen path, could not respond to the virtuosity of translator and tale alike.

A myth of origins

John Clute

WYNETH JONES
Escape Plans
300pp. Allen and Unwin. £8.95.
0402037

Kind of spiky obduracy marks *Escape Plans*, Wyneth Jones's second novel for adults. Inevitably and unilluminatingly acronyms proliferate and are numbingly reiterated; the protagonist is woefully reluctant to understand the world about her. In this regard lagging far behind the normal reader; and the novel's most interesting characters disappear almost as soon as they are introduced, making both protagonists and normal reader feel at times quite thoroughly abandoned. It is a novel that battles at one. At the same time, however, there is the sense of an intention to reveal something fierce and necessary whatever the cost. The glossary at the end of the text helps with some of the acronyms. Aeley's (a-l-i-c-e), for instance, who tells her own story with (one might say) a constant befuddled frown on her face, is a PIONEER (a Passenger or Inhabitant of Non-orbital Environment Rotation), a kind of failed starship that orbits Earth and dominates the raddled planet. She comes to our planet to enjoy some recreation at the Indian SHACTI (or Surface Habitational Command Threshold Installation), where she falls to love with an Earth woman, a kind of underperson. Daringly, she uses her knowledge of the computer network to disen-

gage herself from her own identity, and chases Millie into the world, where she soon loses her.

From this point, Aeley's voyage of discovery and self-discovery takes a superficially familiar form. For readers of science fiction, the underpeople are not dissimilar to those of the late Cordwainer Smith; and Jones's depersonalized, flux-ridden, acronym-choked style bears a strong resemblance to T. J. Bass's in his underrated *Half Past Human* (1971). But this — though it takes place underground — is only the surface of the book.

Underlying and sustaining that not very interesting genre plot, some strikingly interesting arguments are being mooted. Aeley's love for Millie, who in some sense may not exist at all, might represent for the underpeople an inchoate stage in the evolution of a genuine myth of origins. She seems to be immortal; she was born in the real world in the sun; and she brings cargo.

In her depiction of the patterns of balance and vertigo that characterize power relations between the upper and the lower world, Jones comes close to presenting a new vision of politics as a kind of deeply serious *kaffeeklatch* in search of consensus. Through the rebarbative rigidity of style in *Escape Plans* there comes a taste of something hard and complex and intriguing; something resembling, perhaps, a new version of the real world. It is at times hard to understand in this book; perhaps because it may be almost impossible to state. That Jones makes the attempt singles her out as a writer who should be watched and read, however rough the ride.

Criminal proceedings

J. J. Binyon

WOLFEHMAN
The Dork
200pp. Collins. £7.95.
014096

Out of the Burd School, an élite US East Coast secondary for girls with rich daddies, is expelled; crime investigated by Helen and Bob Horowitz, husband and wife cop team. Her tortuous opening gradually modulates to more straightforward narrative and gains momentum. Setting reasonably original, and some of the dialogue is devoted to adolescent female psychology.

WOLFEHMAN
The Dork
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In a town which, give or take a bend in the road and a corrupt politician or two, is not Providence, Rhode Island, Providence is more a novel than a crime story. Though characters are shot, stabbed, filled full of nails, and a nail-gun, cut into pieces and stashed in the boots of one another's Volvos, crime is incidental rather than essential in this account of a randomly linked group of individuals: a boy dying of leukemia, his neurotic wife, a hood who sees herself as a cross between Lincolnton and Princess Di, a bent policeman, an old uncle Tom Copley and all. This is a novel that seems no less acute than Higgins and he can do description too. Absorbent and impressive, though there's a suspicion the author is striving a mile too hard for significance.

WOLFEHMAN
The Dork
200pp. Collins. £7.95.
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Adapted Eye is a story told by Faith, who as a child witnessed the events of the novel, but who can now understand and interpret their meaning as she ponders the complex relationships, the family enmeshments, the psychological pressures that have led forty years ago to murder. Barbara, the fact, Ruth Rendell, the pseudonym, is a good, but a product-name, indicating that readers that they're going to get

something slightly different. And *A Dork Adapted Eye* is certainly more leisurely, more of a novel, than Rendell's other books; after a slow, sticky start it turns into a wholly absorbing narrative set in a marvellously recreated England of the early 1940s.

EVELYN HERVEY
Into the Valley of Death
167pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £8.95.
0297788019

This is the third story by Evelyn Hervey — now known to be H.R.F. Keating — about Miss Harriet Uowin, that clever young Victorian Governess who keeps getting mixed up with murder. Here she's summoned to Chipping Compton in Oxfordshire by her old friend Vilkins, now a housemaid to the local landowner, to try to save Jack Steadman, landlord of the Rising Sun, who is going to be hanged for a murder he didn't commit. As the title suggests, the Crimean War plays an important part in the plot. Deftly narrated and neatly put together, but perhaps a trifle more lightweight than Miss Unwin's previous experiences.

ANN CLEAVES
A Bird in the Hand
200pp. Century. £9.95.
0712694767

Twitchee — the rabid birdwatcher — Toon French is found dead on the marsh near Rushy, a village on the coast of Norfolk which has become a centre for the bird watching fraternity. The murder is investigated by George Palmer, a retired from the Home Office, and also a twitchee. A neatly organized first novel with a reasonable plot and a well-developed sense of place, lifted out of the rack by its description of the fantastic world of the twitchee.

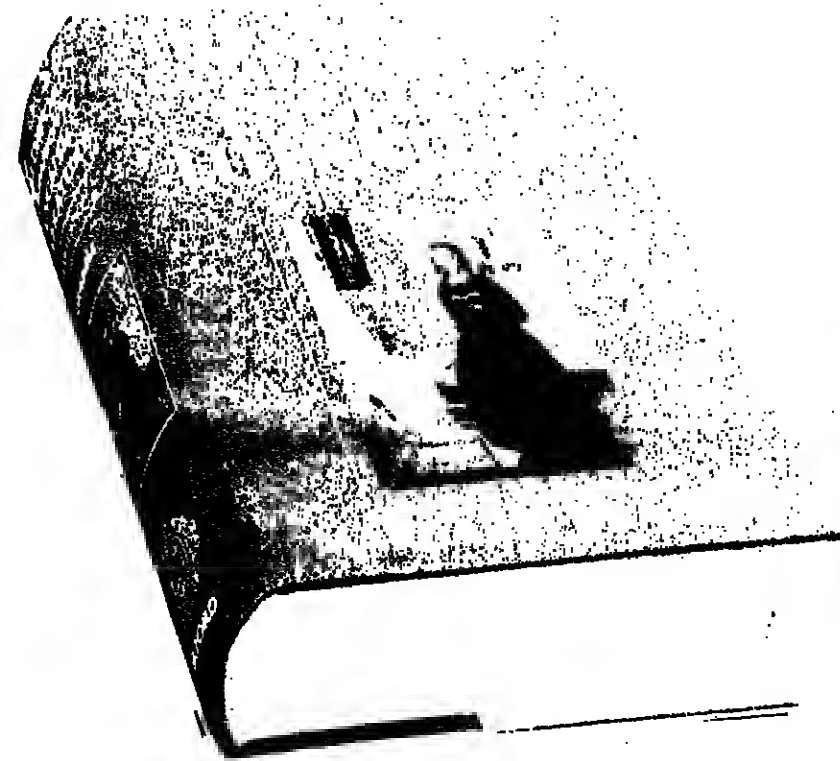
PAUL MYERS
Deadly Cadenza
252pp. Constable. £8.95.
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Young violinist Sandor Bernao is shot through the head with a rifle as he is recording the Beethoven Violin Concerto in the Kingsway Hall. His agent, Mark Holland, is rapidly drawn into an intrigue featuring beautiful American girls, murderous French gunmen and sinister English businessmen. Hooked on a high, but the story keeps up a good pace and the musical background is unusual.

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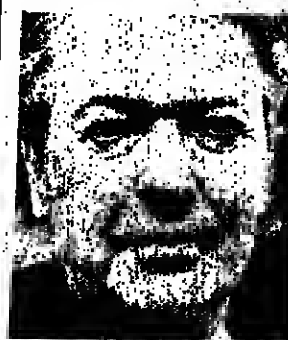
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